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Abstract

This study analyzes the geography of prostitution in twentieth-century Philadelphia. Specifically, it addresses how the spatial organization of the sex trade has changed over this time period and considers possible explanations for this change. The author evaluates the influence of market economics, police repression and moral stigmatization on prostitution's geography in Philadelphia. The author relies on records of prostitution-related arrests, vice complaints, law enforcement testimony, press coverage, and governmental reports to determine the location of vice since the early 1900s. The author concludes that Philadelphia's case study complicates the narrative of spatial change put forth by the existing scholarship, which argues that prostitution has dispersed over the twentieth century. Rather, Philadelphia's sex trade has consistently intensified in clusters or along packed corridors, while the location of these hubs has oscillated between the City's downtown core and its peripheries. This geography has resulted from a dialectical process involving prostitutes' own agency and the imposition of police repression.

Keywords

prostitution, Philadelphia, spatial change, urban studies, Eric Schneider, Eric, Schneider

Disciplines

Urban Studies and Planning

Vicious Geography:
The Spatial Organization of Prostitution in Twentieth Century
Philadelphia

Sarah Bertozzi

Senior Seminar Paper
Professor Eric Schneider
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Preface

The idea to write my thesis on prostitution was largely impulsive. I gained experience working in the field of criminal justice as an intern at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office last spring and in Governor's Rendell's Office of Policy and Planning this past summer. Consequently, crime-related topics intrigued me. My experience in the Urban Studies Department had also developed within me an interest in quality of life issues. Prostitution as a topic appealed to both of these academic interests and was something I had not previously studied.

I chose to focus specifically on the sex trade's spatial organization because of its implications for the urban environment, its feasibility and its variation throughout history. From the beginning, I narrowed my topic to Philadelphia for the accessibility of resources this would afford me. Originally, I wanted to undertake a much broader consideration of prostitution – encompassing its causes, current policy implications and ethnic differences within the sex trade. To narrow my topic further, I chose to focus on a historical account of the twentieth century, concentrating first on how the sex trade's geography had changed and then on why these changes had occurred. These components became the basis for my research question. I further limited the latter issue – why change occurred – to only a consideration of the factors presented in the literature as they applied to Philadelphia. Such a limitation was necessary given my time and resource constraints.

My study is only a preliminary investigation into the geography of Philadelphia's sex trade. Consequently, I have outlined directions for supplemental research at the end of this paper. It is my hope to return to this topic in the future – to further substantiate my claims, to consider their implications more thoroughly and to situate my spatial analysis more completely within Philadelphia's larger history.

Introduction

Prostitution, commonly termed the *oldest profession*, has been endemic in North American cities since the country's colonization. Despite its illegality, the sex trade has subsisted in the urban underworld. The geography of prostitution within America's municipalities is an important issue due to the alleged deterioration of the quality of life that vice inspires. The sex trade is first and foremost a public nuisance – prostitutes unnerve pedestrians and often disturb passersby. They hold up traffic, are an eyesore for residents, and are poor role models for the young children growing up in an affected area. Additionally, prostitution has often been associated with increased criminality and with the proliferation of the drug trade in such neighborhood. Beyond the real effects of commercial sex, the public perceives vice to be an immoral and seedy underworld activity, and consequently does not want it to exist in its communities. As a result of these actual consequences and perceptions, prostitution has the additional detrimental effect of lowering property values, driving out residents, and potentially causing blight and deterioration in the locality. In order to combat the damage inflicted by the sex trade, municipalities have long attempted to thwart its spatial organization through law enforcement and city planning initiatives. The geography of prostitution, thus, is significant both for its quality of life implications in the neighborhoods where it occurs and as the subject of continued governmental intervention.

In this paper, I consider the geography of prostitution in twentieth century Philadelphia. It is my intent to help readers understand the patterns of concentration and dispersion that characterize the sex trade's spatial organization and the factors which influence it. Knowing the history of vice location may enable public officials to anticipate future re-locations, while knowing the factors which influence the development of

prostitution in an area may assist officials in circumventing this migration. Philadelphia serves as an excellent case study because the geography of its sex trade has changed greatly since the beginning of the twentieth century, and because prostitutes themselves have remained undeterred despite the extensive efforts of municipal officials.

Additionally, no previous studies have examined the spatial organization of vice in this city. It is important to note that this paper should not be read as a stand for or against the legalization of prostitution. I am not making a value judgment concerning the criminality of the sex trade, even though I offer an analysis which may help municipal governments to better combat prostitution. Rather, I accept current vice policy as a given and, hence, seek to understand the spatial implications and effectiveness of this repression.

Furthermore, I have only considered female prostitution. The sex trade encompasses many races, classes and genders, each of which has a distinct geography of prostitution to be studied. I have chosen to consider only this most frequent form of prostitution, without taking into account either ethnic variation or male prostitution, due to the difficulty of doing so given the limitations of my data sources.

My research and analysis are an attempt to determine how the spatial organization of Philadelphia's sex trade has changed since the beginning of the twentieth century and why. Specifically, I have investigated whether prostitution has transitioned from a concentrated organization in a segregated vice district to a more dispersed geography over this time period. I have also considered the factors which have most affected the geography of prostitution. Philadelphia's sex trade has fluctuated between concentration in the central city and concentration at the peripheries over the course of the twentieth century, revealing a longstanding tension between these divergent spatial organizations. This oscillating geography results from a dialectical process involving law enforcement

and prostitutes' assertion of their rights. Specifically, the data suggests that transportation infrastructure and police repression have most contributed to the re-spatialization of prostitution in this city. These conclusions both respond and contribute to the extensive literature on prostitution.

Literature Review

In studying the geography of Philadelphia's sex trade, I have considered how and why the spatial organization of prostitution has changed since the beginning of the twentieth century. The extensive literature that exists on prostitution and its geography portrays vice as concentrated in specific districts during the Progressive Era and as dispersed in the mid to late twentieth century. Hence, the scholarship would suggest that Philadelphia's sex trade has transitioned from a centrally-located, intense organization to a more peripheral layout since the early 1900s. It is my aim to determine whether such a paradigm of dispersion adequately explains the changing geography of prostitution in Philadelphia. Dispersion includes two conditions that may or may not co-exist – the decentralization of activity away from the central business district and the diffusion of activity. Twentieth century models consider both such conditions, and make the mistake of discussing them interchangeably. In addition, there is dispute within the scholarship over the cause of vice diffusion, with the main theories implicating market economics, police suppression, or moral stigma. I will evaluate the influence of these factors in the context of twentieth century Philadelphia with the intent of contributing to this debate. By applying the literature and its internal controversies to Philadelphia, my research also fills a gap in the scholarship, which lacks a historical account of prostitution in this city.

It is important to note that *prostitute* is an umbrella term for sex-workers of all classes, races and genders. In accordance with my research design, I have not considered the significant literature devoted to gay male prostitution and to ethnic disparity in commercial sex provision. Both gender and racial differences have spatial implications for the sex trade. As such, there are additional models of vice geography which emphasize the impact of homosexuality and ethnic culture on the spatial organization of prostitution. Ivan Light proposes such a paradigm in “The Ethnic Vice Industry,” in which he attributes disparity in the organization of the Chinese and the African American vice industries to cultural and demographic distinctions between the two ethnic groups.¹ While I have not explored these theories fully, their application to Philadelphia should be made the subject of future research.

The historical literature on prostitution depicts an industry that was highly concentrated during the nineteenth century. In the main urban centers, brothels, street walkers, saloons, gambling halls, illicit theatres and all forms of vice were segregated together into densely packed districts of sin. In his study of prostitution in nineteenth century New York City, Timothy Gilfoyle identifies two generations of “prostitution zones”.² In the early nineteenth century, Broadway from City Hall to Houston Street, “Rotten Row” extending from Church and Chapel Streets to Laurens Street on the West Side, the Five Points slum, and the area along the East River by Water and Cherry Streets and Corlears Hook were all “defined by the preponderance of commercialized sex.”³ They were intense clusters, he notes, with establishments of overt sexuality and debauchery packed together on each street. In the late nineteenth century, though, “a new

¹ I. Light, “The Ethnic Vice Industry,” *American Sociological Review*, 42.3 (June, 1977), pp.464-479.

² T. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex 1790-1920*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p. 36.

³ Gilfoyle, 30.

geography of sex districts emerged.”⁴ The Tenderloin, between Gramercy Park, Murray Hill and Hell’s Kitchen, and the Rialto, on Fourteenth Street from Third Avenue to Broadway and Union Square, became the new centers of infamy. Like their predecessors, these hubs were highly concentrated, yet they were less defined by “blatant sexuality.”⁵ Instead, Gilfoyle writes, prostitutes worked “alongside the city’s leading theatres, hotels, and restaurants,” often intermixed with working class residences and legitimate commercial establishments.⁶ For Gilfoyle, this intermingling of industries was the primary force shaping prostitution’s geography.

The same factors which are later attributed to prostitution’s dispersion can ironically also be applied to nineteenth century concentration. Market forces and commercialization contributed to the cohesion of vice districts. This economic perspective is the primary stance Gilfoyle argues in explaining the location and organization of commercialized sex in nineteenth century New York City. According to him and other scholars, the clustering of sex services corresponded with the rise of a “sporting-male culture,” which created an intense demand for low-brow theatre, liquor and sexual fulfillment.⁷ In response to this demand, the entertainment and vice industries developed together, resulting in closely intertwined geographies. According to Gilfoyle, “brothels and theatres enjoyed close spatial ties.”⁸ As evidence, he asserts that “the six major theatres operations from 1820 to 1829...were located within two blocks of a house of prostitution,” and that “by the Civil War, six of fourteen Broadway theatres were sharing the same block as a house of prostitution.”⁹ Many of these sporting-men came to

⁴ Gilfoyle, 198.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gilfoyle, 102.

⁸ Gilfoyle, 112.

⁹ Ibid.

the city as tourists. Hence, hotels became another draw for prostitution. “During the 1830s,” Gilfoyle writes, “at least thirty-four houses of prostitution in the city (13 percent of the total) were within two and a half blocks of a hotel.”¹⁰ The demand principle also prompted the clustering of brothels in locations readily accessible to male laborers. For instance, the Walnut Street corridor, which “had the highest concentration of commercial sex in New York” during the mid 1800’s, was directly adjacent to the city’s “bustling shipyards, coal and granite dumps, mills, and the Allaire Iron Works,” Gilfoyle notes.¹¹

Similarly, economic factors led to the development of New York’s second generation sex districts in the late nineteenth century. Gilfoyle attributes the change in geography to new industrial developments and shifts in real estate use. First, the industrialization of garment manufacturing in the downtown area pushed entertainment enterprises, and by association prostitution, uptown.¹² The theatres started the migration north along Broadway, to Twenty-third Street in the 1880s and to Forty-second Street and Times Square by the turn-of-the-century. Seeking to capitalize on the same sporting-male culture and market that predominated in the first half of the nineteenth century, the sex industry quickly followed.¹³ At the same time, Gilfoyle remarks, the widespread construction of tenement houses attracted working-class and immigrant populations. This created a ready market for prostitution, and the sex industry’s spatial organization quickly adapted. Consequently, tenement prostitution replaced brothels as the dominant form of sex provision.¹⁴ Thus, according to Gilfoyle, demand forces had a continued influence over the sex industry’s spatial organization during the nineteenth century.

¹⁰ Gilfoyle, 47.

¹¹ Gilfoyle, 52.

¹² Gilfoyle, 199.

¹³ Gilfoyle, 202.

¹⁴ Gilfoyle, 201.

Another factor which profoundly influenced the geographic concentration of the sex trade was state intervention, specifically in the form of law enforcement. During the nineteenth century, prostitution maintained a quasi-legal status. Politicians and law enforcement used this legal balancing act to their advantage. Ward politicians and policemen benefited financially from protecting prostitution, and thus tolerated it for the associated economic gain. Threatening to penalize brothels for their infractions, law enforcement and municipal officials set up an unofficial protection network, whereby brothel owners could buy police neglect. By paying off the police and ward politicians, all parties benefited – brothels could continue to reap large profits from the selling of sex, politicians gained a regular tribute system and could be assured that their own infidelities would be kept silent, and police officers could safely earn a second income without fear of political consequence.¹⁵ In “The Making of an Underground Market: Drug Selling in Chicago, 1900-1940,” Joseph Spillane illustrates the spatial consequences for vice, resulting from police protection. Similar to prostitution, Chicago’s drug dealers relied on a system of bribery to escape apprehension at the turn of the twentieth century. Consequently, asserts Spillane, the drug trade segregated itself into only those areas where police protection was assured, in the Near North, South and West Sides of the city.¹⁶ He reveals, then, the geographic implication of police corruption – the concentration of vice into distinct urban districts. Official containment policies, in which the police tolerated vice only within a specified area, further augmented segregation in the early twentieth century. Spillane demonstrates the spatial influence of containment when he describes its role in restricting drug sales to the “Black Belt” section of

¹⁵ R. Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 72-75.

¹⁶ J. Spillane, “The Making of an Underground Market: Drug Selling in Chicago, 1900-1940,” *The Journal of Social History*, 32.1 (Fall 1998), pp. 37.

Chicago's South Side.¹⁷ Thus, systematic police protection and containment were instrumental in promoting the intensification of vice at the turn of the century.

The driving force behind state intervention and segregation policies was the moral outcry prostitution raised among the dominant classes in the nineteenth century. Many citizens believed that prostitution would pollute proper society and would deprave middle-class women. Prostitution was also strongly associated with immigrant communities in the public mind, though statistical evidence shows that the majority of prostitutes at the turn-of-the-century were actually native-born.¹⁸ Fear of moral debasement and xenophobia motivated public support for the clear segregation of vice into distinct enclaves of underworld activity. As with market forces and police repression, moral stigmatization is later used as an explanation of the sex industry's de-intensification.

What kept moral opposition from completely marginalizing and suppressing prostitution during this period (as compared to in the twentieth century), was the conflicting cultural notion that prostitution did, in fact, fulfill a needed social function. During the nineteenth century, it was believed that to prevent rape and pre-marital sex, males, especially bachelors, required prostitutes as an outlet for sexual fulfillment.¹⁹ Paradoxically, prostitution was even regarded as a prevention against infidelity – sex with such *fallen* women was not considered a breach of marital contract. As Barbara Epstein notes, “what is striking is that in the middle class, where the idea of women engaging in sex outside marriage was viewed with horror, men's visits to prostitutes was almost taken

¹⁷ Spillane, 41.

¹⁸ Gilfoyle, 292.

¹⁹ P. Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America 1820-1920*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 202-203.

for granted.”²⁰ Thus, the moral condemnation of commercialized sex by the middle and upper classes was incomplete. They saw the need to force prostitution into densely packed areas, where it could exist as a necessary evil without infiltrating and contaminating respectable society.

The semi-toleration of prostitution by the upper classes, however, was waning by the end of the nineteenth century. While feminist organizations like the New York Female Moral Reform Society continued to provide refuge for prostitutes and to campaign against the sexual license and double standard afforded men, they faced increasing societal opposition.²¹ At the turn-of-the-century, a series of commercial and cultural changes spurred a more intense and expansive public outcry, which fundamentally changed the sex industry. The scale of the sex trade’s commercialization escalated at the end of the nineteenth century. The result was a more overt prostitution, which appeared, in the words of Ruth Rosen, “especially dehumanizing and most flagrantly immoral.”²² Progressive Era reformers feared this increased commercialization, believing that the sex industry would become uncontrollable and would corrupt all of society.

Contemporaneous cultural trends increased Progressive concern. Middle-class women increasingly participated in the public arena, the sphere once occupied only by *fallen* women. Moralists and middle-class men feared that prostitutes would pervert such women and destroy their propriety. Thus, they lashed out at the sex industry with new ferocity.²³ As more immigrants flooded cities, xenophobia and racism also increased.

²⁰ B. Epstein, Family, sexual morality, and popular movements in turn-of-the-century America. In A. Snitow, C. Stansell & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Powers of Desire*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), p. 121.

²¹ C. Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 109.

²² Rosen, 42.

²³ Rosen, 46.

Progressive reformers used this racism to their advantage, fictionalizing a connection between prostitution and ethnic infiltration to garner support for their purity movement. Similarly, the reformers linked prostitution to a larger criminality, blaming prostitutes for increased crime rates, particularly drug proliferation and robberies.

The outbreak of World War I provided further support for the Progressive reformers' cause. The fear of venereal disease infecting the nation's soldiers prompted a wave of social hygienists to decry prostitution. They promoted policies which allowed for the arrest of women loitering near soldier encampments and mandated medical examinations for all arrested prostitutes.²⁴ New "red-light abatement laws," passed in every state except Nevada, Vermont, and Oklahoma by 1920, aided such policies and combated police corruption. These laws authorized individuals to bring court action against brothels without police or district attorney intervention. The consequence of these collective efforts and policies was to end the reign of concentrated, overt prostitution in centrally-located red-light districts. As a result, the sex industry was forced to adapt – to embrace streetwalking or to continue underground under the guise of legitimate business establishments.²⁵ As Ruth Rosen wrote in 1982, reflecting on developments since the early twentieth century, the "protective red-light district in which the subcultures of prostitution once flourished has disappeared. Street walking... has become the predominate means of solicitation."²⁶ It is important to note that Rosen's characterization of the sex trade ignores ethnic variation. Alvin Light, for instance, posits that in the early twentieth century, the organization of Chinese prostitution involved syndicated brothels, while the African American equivalent involved an extensive network of streetwalkers

²⁴ Rosen, 34-36.

²⁵ R. Symanski, *The Immoral Landscape: Female Prostitution in Western Societies*, (Toronto: Butterworth & Co., 1981), p. 196.

²⁶ Rosen, 172.

and pimps.²⁷ Regardless of these differences, the rise of streetwalking and underground establishments has meant decentralization for the sex industry.

The twentieth century, then, began with the dispersion of the sex trade within many urban centers. After the initial rupture of red-light districts due to the Progressive Era and the social hygiene movement, however, the extent of prostitution's diffusion is more questionable. While downtown vice districts ceased to exist, concentration has occurred in peripheral areas. No previous studies have considered the changing geography of prostitution in twentieth century Philadelphia, yet scholars have presented models of dispersion for other localities that inform this study. The literature contains divergent theories concerning the sources of vice de-centralization and de-intensification. Echoing the analysis of nineteenth century concentration, the debate divides over the influence of market-economic factors, police repression, and moral stigmatization.

Scholars arguing for the spatial implications of a market system contend that streetwalkers and brothel prostitutes are business strategists first and foremost, seeking to maximize their profits by locating where the demand exists for their services. Accordingly, they argue, prostitutes have constantly re-located throughout the twentieth century, and this mobility has necessarily inhibited vice concentration. Richard Symanski is one such scholar. In *The Immoral Landscape: Female Prostitution in Western Societies*, Symanski characterizes twentieth-century prostitution as highly dynamic. Male patrons want to experience a variety of sex services and women, Symanski argues, spurring a constant cycle of prostitute re-location. Hence, the "demand for diversity has been a significant reason for the mobility of prostitutes" in the late twentieth century, he

²⁷ Light.

claims.²⁸ This mobility has been both inter-city and intra-city. In the former category, Symanski speaks of the ‘road ho’ or ‘circuit ho,’ who works “as many as ten cities, gearing precise movements to weather and large conventions,” and the “‘camp hos’ of the Pacific Northwest [who] make rounds of logging and construction sites.”²⁹ These prostitutes act as savvy businesswomen, strategically re-locating to capitalize on the demand of convention tourists or laborers. Symanski also mentions the ‘out-of-town girls’ in Vancouver, who draw contempt from less-savvy streetwalkers. The newcomers understand the demand for diversity and consequently “monopolize the market... because they are new.”³⁰ Inter-city migration, as Symanski points out, has inhibited stability and prevented prostitutes from establishing ties with particular urban districts in the late twentieth century. This instability is further enhanced by the rise of international sex trafficking and the illegal transportation of sex slaves from city to city to satiate the sexual desires of immigrant workers.³¹ Yet, according to Symanski, “as measured by number and frequency,” the moves of prostitutes “occurring within and between neighborhoods are more important than circulation at regional and national scales.”³²

Prostitutes also exercise supply-and-demand savvy within a given urban setting, engaging in inner-city migration to maximize their earning potential. Symanski cites as examples, streetwalkers in port cities who solicit on docks and ships and the tendency of sex-workers to frequent urban truck stops.³³ Foot and car traffic are major considerations for streetwalkers, who prefer to work along main thoroughfares. The extent to which economic consideration determines prostitute locality is clearly illustrated by Symanski –

²⁸ Symanski, 184.

²⁹ Symanski, 182-183.

³⁰ Symanski, 185.

³¹ K. Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*, (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 80-82.

³² Symanski, 187.

³³ Symanski, 171.

“Bus stops and intersections with traffic lights are preferred soliciting sites,” he writes.

“A male halted in his forward progress is an easier target than an ambulatory one,” the time between the red light and the green light is adequate for flirting and sufficient to reel in a catch, and the traffic flow presents a constant source of potential income.³⁴ Symanski reveals the impact of transportation infrastructure in constructing sex markets.

Transportation hubs are heavily trafficked, providing a ready clientele for prostitutes. Hence, in the twentieth-century, locations of vehicular and pedestrian traffic have been convergence points for streetwalkers and their patrons. No longer able to rely on a concentrated red-light district for an easily accessible market, prostitutes have had to seek out markets themselves as active agents. This transition has meant decentralization and diffusion for the sex trade.

Another major strand in the literature identifies law enforcement as a principle factor affecting the geography of prostitution. The specific spatial consequence attributed to policing – dispersion or intensification – varies, however, according to the intervening state’s public policy. In his consideration of the effects of streetwalker mobility, Symanski also recognizes the role of police repression in motivating vice dispersion. He argues that “illegality and periodic repression are principal causative agents” of sex trade relocation, because prostitutes use mobility as a coping strategy to escape police repression.³⁵ “Where repression is strong prostitutes walk a lot,” Symanski asserts. “Walking cuts down on the possibility of arrests, as it is an effective method of reducing visibility.”³⁶ The use of automobiles to further elude police is also commonplace. He cites the example of prostitutes in Rome, Genoa and Milan after the 1958 Merlin law

³⁴ Symanski, 174.

³⁵ Symanski, 187.

³⁶ Symanski, 165.

abolished the licensing of streetwalkers and legalized brothels in Italy. Reacting to their new criminality, these women began soliciting from cars, acquiring the nickname of ‘klaxon girls.’³⁷ In Great Britain, Australia and South Africa such prostitutes are called ‘kerb-crawlers’ and exist in large numbers.³⁸ A sex industry, where prostitutes crisscross the city in automobiles to evade apprehension, is a-spatial by nature. Symanski also considers how police repression affects streetwalkers’ practice of *strolling* a particular set of blocks. He cites examples in New York City, San Francisco, and Oakland during the 1960s and 70s where changes to municipal policy, and in turn policing efforts, triggered the immediate relocation of these corridors to lesser-known areas all over the city.³⁹ Hence, even when mobility is not exercised on a daily basis, Symanski argues, prostitutes deliberately engage in a highly unorganized, dynamic trade to counter the threat of law enforcement. This unprecedented mobility prevents concentration and would defy the organization of any vice district.

In sharp contrast, other scholars credit police intervention with promoting the sex trade’s intensification. Philip Hubbard argues that law enforcement leads to the concentration of vice in low-income, deteriorated neighborhoods where the police can deliberately contain prostitution without fear of significant community opposition.⁴⁰ He substantiates this claim with examples from the United Kingdom, which he characterizes as “particularly relevant,” and Glasgow.⁴¹ Similar to the containment policy Spillane described in turn-of-the-century Chicago, Hubbard illustrates how police repression in the mid to late twentieth century has often had the effect of quarantining prostitution,

³⁷ Symanski, 188-189.

³⁸ Symanski, 166.

³⁹ Symanski, 187-189.

⁴⁰ P. Hubbard, *Sex and the City: Geographies of Prostitution in the Urban West*. (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999), p. 120.

⁴¹ Hubbard, 119.

intensifying it in marginal neighborhoods. It appears, then, that theories like Hubbard's call into question the accuracy of those like Symanski's. Yet, these scholars are not considering the same countries. Policing reflects the policies and laws of a particular municipality, state or country, and thus varies from place to place. Hence, the difference in Hubbard and Symanski's arguments may be attributable to differences in the policy models to which they apply. For example, the containment practice described by Hubbard is only legal under a system like England's, which tolerates prostitutes as *victims* but sanctions clients, brothel-owners and pimps.⁴² In fact, when the United States had a similar system of quasi-toleration during the late nineteenth century, law enforcement also practiced vice containment in bounded districts, as Spillane illustrates. Conversely, Symanski draws most of his examples from the United States during the mid to late twentieth century, where all forms of prostitution have been criminalized and vice has not been officially tolerated (except in Nevada). Thus, theories like Symanski's, which associate police repression with the dispersion of the sex trade, remain strong as models for modern-day prostitution in the United States. And, in turn, have the most relevance my research.

Moral stigmatization's contribution to vice decentralization is the other current running through the literature on prostitution. While theories of state intervention and policing reflect public disdain for prostitution, scholars like Hubbard consider the direct spatial implications of societal disapproval. For them, widespread moral concern has resulted in the relegation of prostitution to marginal areas of the city. Hubbard definitively asserts that "geographies of female sex work can only be understood in

⁴² Hubbard, 106.

relation to wider moral judgments about the acceptability of sex work.”⁴³ The experience of prostitutes in Western cities, he adds, “indicates how the moral contours of society are mapped on to (and out of) specific urban spaces.”⁴⁴ He attributes the moral condemnation prostitutes receive to their status as an ‘other,’ emblematic of “urban and sexual disorder,” and their perceived connection with an entire class of “social undesirables.”⁴⁵ At the root of community protest against prostitution, he writes, “is the idea that prostitution transforms a morally-ordered *family* space into an immoral and sexualized space.”⁴⁶ He cites as an example English protesters in Bassall Heath, Manningham and Streatham during the 1990’s. They opposed vice not out of “fears for personal safety or fears of crime victimisation,” but out of moral anxiety and apprehension at the thought of their neighborhood being labeled “as one in which street prostitution occurs.”⁴⁷ Myths of pervasive drug use and the AIDS epidemic have further augmented the social stigma towards prostitution in Western Europe.⁴⁸ The outcome, Hubbard notes, has been the herding of prostitution away from the central city to the margins of society, where it can be shut out by *respectable* citizens. Hubbard’s thesis, then, illustrates the distinction between decentralization and diffusion. While Hubbard argues that vice has decentralized, as in it has been displaced from the urban core, he still views prostitution in Western Europe as concentrated, just in a different form. For Hubbard, the real shift in the geography of prostitution over the twentieth century has been from concentration in central red-light districts to concentration in marginalized, impoverished areas that have been shunned by dominant society.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hubbard, 116.

⁴⁵ Hubbard, 98-99.

⁴⁶ Hubbard, 163.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Hubbard, 167-169.

Moral stigmatization is not unrelated to police repression. Municipal governments intervene in the sex trade, in part, as a response to the widespread public opposition it generates. Yet, public officials are most concerned with the reactions of the affluent. The relegation of vice reflects this power structure. Symanski explicitly links moral disapproval and governmental intervention in his “geopolitical sink principle.” This theory holds that “public opinion and political action combine to confine obnoxious or immoral institutions to areas that have the least political clout, ideally the ghettos of racial minorities.”⁴⁹ Symanski, too, then acknowledges the marginalization of prostitution. Unlike Hubbard, however, he does not see the sex industry as having an intensified spatial organization within these fringe localities.

Thus, the literature’s contending strands can be reduced into two larger paradigms. Theories emphasizing the spatial implications of supply-and-demand economics depict the prostitute as on the offensive, as a rational agent proactively constructing her own geography. Alternatively, theories expounding the geographic influence of law enforcement and moral stigmatization cast the prostitute in a defensive position, her actions reduced to self-protective coping strategies. Hence, the extent of control prostitutes exert over their profession may be a more encompassing determinant of the sex trade’s geography.

In sum, the dominant theme in the scholarship concerning prostitution’s spatial organization has been that of concentration in the nineteenth century and dispersion in the twentieth century. Beyond this general pattern, however, there is dispute over the source of decentralization – whether market forces, state and police intervention, or moral condemnation is the primary factor driving the relocation of vice away from city centers.

⁴⁹ Symanski, 129.

Additionally, the literature raises the question of whether decentralization and dispersal are synonymous with regard to vice geography. Has the sex industry truly fractured in the twentieth century, becoming fundamentally a-spatial in nature, or has it simply re-concentrated in marginal localities in the most undesirable areas of the city? There is also a place component to the scholarship on prostitution. Theories are the products of the countries and policy models from which they originate. Hence, a paradigm of vice dispersion which applies to England may not hold for North American cities, and visa versa. Thus, the existing scholarship on the geography of prostitution presents two quandaries which inform my study: First, for the case of Philadelphia in the twentieth century, did the sex trade decentralize? Did it disperse? To what extent are these the same phenomena in Philadelphia? Second, if I do observe a trend of decentralization, which factor or factors best apply to this case study? By answering these questions, it is my hope to contribute new empirical insight to the literature and to respond to the theoretical disputes with my own substantiated interpretation.

Methodology

The fluidity of the sex trade and its underworld-status has rendered it nearly impossible to track the exact location of prostitution. Both street walkers and indoor establishments exhibit a mobility, which defies the assignment of a fixed geography. With this in mind, I have relied on proxies to provide the most accurate spatial depiction of Philadelphia's illegal sex industry. Prostitution arrests, made by different divisions of the Police Department in the early to mid-twentieth century, offer the best approximation of vice locality. Additionally, I used local press references, governmental reports, and public complaints to re-enforce and complete my conceptualization of prostitution's

geography. Because my research has depended largely on historical records, I had little choice in selecting evidence. My data sources are restricted to only those records, reports and newspaper clipping that the City has preserved and made publicly accessible. Consequently, my sources lack consistency. While this discontinuity has limited the control I have been able to exert over my research design, the variation in my sources has improved the validity and reliability of my results. I pieced together all these different fragments as thoroughly as possible to create a narrative of prostitution's changing spatial organization.

I began my research collecting address-level data from the records of the Philadelphia Police Department. Specifically, I used the Vice Squad's Register of Arrests for May 1930 through February 1933 and June through December 1939, the Vice complaints received by the Police Department from 1924 to 1928, and the Special Investigation Division's Register of Arrests spanning 1948-1952 and 1952-1961.⁵⁰ These records represent the entirety of the publicly-accessible, incident-level, vice-related police records for twentieth-century Philadelphia. In gathering my evidence, then, I have necessarily had to jump from arrest data, to public complaints, and have had to deal with inconsistent police units and time periods. For this reason, my sampling strategy is not systematic. Rather, I constructed my research design around these archival restraints, selecting roughly year-long segments (the segments varied based on the time-frame and number of the records available) in each decade to use as evidence. The resulting subset of records, on which I have based my analysis, consists of the Vice Squad's arrests from May-December 1930 and June-December 1939, vice complaints for the entirety of 1924, and the Special Investigations Division's arrests for 1949, 1954-1956 and 1960-1961. I

⁵⁰ Record Numbers 79.30, 79.40, and 79.18, respectively; located at the City Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

chose to code multiple-year segments of the Special Investigations' arrests because of the low frequency of arrests during this time period.

For evidence corresponding to the rest of the twentieth century, I sought out governmental and media sources. The Vice Commission of Philadelphia's *A Report on Existing Conditions with Recommendations to the Honorable Rudolph Blankenburg, Mayor of Philadelphia* in 1913 includes address-level information for the location of prostitution in the Progressive Era city. The report defines spatially the areas most saturated with vice and contains an appendix with partial addresses for the incidents of prostitution the Commission investigated. In addition, I used a collection of newspaper clippings from July through August 1916 – describing the Police Department's raid of the City's prostitution establishments – to reinforce and complete my understanding of the sex trade's geography at this time.⁵¹ These articles recount the locations targeted by the police. As such, I used them for additional geographic information and to identify patterns in the partial address information included in the 1913 Vice Commission report. From these patterns I deduced the predominant prostitution corridors at that time.

I was unable to locate incident-level data for prostitution in post-1961 Philadelphia. Instead, I collected aggregate spatial data from newspaper clipping from the 1970s and early 1980s about the city's sex trade (the most recent articles available were from 1982).⁵² Additionally, I utilized Vice Reports from the 1960s and 1970s which included the total number of arrests made monthly by each police district for violations of Pennsylvania Penal Code 512 (the code corresponding to prostitution at the time).⁵³ I mapped the data contained in the 1972 report in order to illustrate which districts reported

⁵¹ Record Number 79.28, City Archives.

⁵² Newspaper Clippings Collection, subject heading: prostitution, Temple Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA.

⁵³ As verified by Lieutenant Pat Brennan, Philadelphia Police Department, 14 November, 2005.

the highest frequency of anti-vice activity. Lastly, I interviewed Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano, the officers in charge of the current Citywide Vice Unit, to understand the geography of present-day prostitution. They refused to grant me access to incident-level data. To complement this interview, I used the data provided on the Philadelphia *Crimebase* to map prostitution arrests by census tract for the years spanning 1998 to 2004. It is important to note that Green and Lanciano rejected the *Crimebase* arrest counts as fewer than occurred in reality, but affirmed that the maps accurately reflected larger spatial trends in the sex trade's geography. Thus, in my study I have only treated the *Crimebase* data qualitatively, as an additional mechanism for visually representing spatial organization.

To synthesize the address-level data I had collected, I constructed maps using Geographic Information Systems technology. I used the same methodology to visually represent the prostitution corridors and hubs identified by the 1913 Vice Commission, by Green and Lanciano, and by the local press in 1916, the 1970's and 1980's. These maps formed the basis for my analysis of how the spatial organization of prostitution has changed over the twentieth century.

It is important to point out the limitations of using law enforcement data to evaluate the changing geographies of prostitution. It is difficult to determine how accurate arrest records are as a measure of actual prostitution frequency in a designated area – whether in fact a high incidence of arrests in one city block actually corresponds to the amount of soliciting activity which occurs there. Due to corruption or biases, the police may excessively patrol certain areas of the city, while allowing prostitution to continue unfettered in others. When this is the case, the arrest records suggest the existence of an intense cluster of prostitution in the first area and a lack of vice in the

latter. The literature on prostitution is replete with discussion of police protection, whereby officers selectively arrest only those women who do not bribe them with regular payments. Similarly, much scholarship has been devoted to biases in policing, which lead officers to disproportionately target minority prostitutes or those working in seedier establishments. Further inaccuracy results from the frequent mischaracterization of women as prostitutes, especially in the early-twentieth century. I have no way of knowing whether an arrested “prostitute” was in fact a professional streetwalker or simply a woman walking alone at night. Lastly, the Vice Squad and the Special Investigations Division were not the only police units dealing with prostitution during these time periods. During the 1950s and 1960s, a distinct Vice Squad and officers within each Police District made regular arrests for prostitution in addition to Special Investigations. Given this shared responsibility, it is unclear whether the geography of the Special Investigations Division’s arrests is in fact representative of that for all the prostitution arrests during this time period. It may be that the Division patrolled only selective areas of the city or disproportionately targeted certain areas. This would significantly skew my results. These issues have clear implications for the validity of my analysis. Yet, the extent to which they have affected the accuracy of my data is unknowable.

My use of newspaper coverage to reconstruct historical locations of prostitution also has limitations. The press too is biased in its coverage. Newspapers tend to expend energy on the issues which generate concern among their readership. As such, it is probable that journalists have historically been more inclined to write about the sex trade in Center City, where the affluent and a large proportion of their readership live and work, than they have been to write about vice in marginal, impoverished areas where residents have insufficient social capital to generate widespread concern. Often these

latter areas had been wiped from the public memory altogether, dismissed as incurable slums of blight and underworld activity to be forgotten. The effect of such bias would be to prejudice my evidence towards Center City prostitution. This raises the question of whether the dearth of articles regarding vice in more marginal areas of the city actually reflects the nonexistence of prostitution in these areas, or whether it reflects the deliberate under-reporting of journalists concerned only with appealing to their downtown readership. I have been sensitive to this prejudicing in my analysis, especially with the clipping from the 1970's and 1980's which focus exclusively on downtown streetwalking. Thus, as evidence of actual prostitution activity, police arrests and press coverage have their limitations. Nonetheless, they represent the best available data for an analysis of the sex trade's geography.

The second part of my analysis considers the factors which have influenced prostitution's geography since the beginning of the twentieth century. I chose to focus on supply-and-demand economic, law enforcement and demographic factors in response to the literature, particularly Gilfoyle, Symanski and Hubbard's models for why the sex trade has re-located throughout history. In this study, I evaluate these authors' paradigms as they apply to twentieth century Philadelphia. My analysis is speculative in nature, restricted by the limited supply of publicly-accessible historical records.

To analyze the influence economic factors have had on vice location, I considered the geographies of the entertainment and hospitality industries, the spatial implications of outdoor versus indoor prostitution, and the impact of transportation infrastructure. For the first, I compared the location of theatres and hotels to that of prostitution for the years

1915 (compared to the 1913 and 1916 vice areas), 1930, and 1960.⁵⁴ Timothy Gilfoyle's claim in *City of Eros* that the migration of theatres and hotels prompted the re-location of the sex industry in nineteenth century New York City inspired my methodology. In my analysis, I test whether a similar correlation existed for Philadelphia in the following century. Theatres and hotels also have a historic significance for prostitution. In the early-twentieth century, the third floor of theatres were, by definition, reserved for soliciting, while hotels have long housed potential clientele and served as outposts for call girls and prostitution rings. To investigate the spatial implications of streetwalking versus indoor prostitution as a form of commercialized vice, I again utilized arrest data. In their records, both the 1930s Vice Squad and the Special Investigations Division differentiate between prostitution types, including disorderly houses, bawdy houses, houses of assignation and disorderly streetwalking. Their characterization of these types differed over the twentieth century, but the distinction between indoor and outdoor soliciting was maintained. I compared the geographies of house-prostitution and streetwalking, in particular for the period mid-century when both forms flourished concurrently. In doing so, I looked for divergent trends that could potentially be attributed to the difference in prostitution-type. Lastly, I used qualitative evidence from my interview, newspaper articles and governmental reports to determine the extent to which prostitutes situate themselves near areas of heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic. I have treated transportation infrastructure as a possible marketplace for prostitution in my analysis, and have sought to examine whether, in fact, demand and supply converge at such locations.

To evaluate law enforcement practices as a potential factor affecting the spatial organization of vice, I studied Grand Jury investigations into police corruption.

⁵⁴ Theatre and hotel addresses collected from the Classified Yellow Pages for these years, located at The Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA.

Specifically, I considered formal reports from 1937 and 1974 and informal press coverage of the investigation following the 1916 police raids. Additionally, I consulted all the available Philadelphia Police Department Annual Reports for the twentieth century (from 1907 to 1923, 1948 to 1954, and 1959 to 1990) in order to document the total number of prostitution arrests in each year. And in my interview with Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano of the Citywide Vice Unit, I questioned them thoroughly on this topic. I used these sources to elucidate occurrences of police corruption and shifts in the Department's tactics and internal structure, and as evidence of the spatial implications of such phenomena. I utilized the same primary sources to illustrate the coping strategies prostitutes have employed to evade arrest. These strategies require mobility and thus form the link in my analysis between policing and changed locations of prostitution.

Finally, I considered demographic factors to determine what specific population and quality of life characteristics have tended to be associated with prostitution areas. To do so, I consulted the records of the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, the City Planning Commission and the Greater Philadelphia Movement relating to neighborhoods of the city historically associated with vice – Skid Row and the Poplar, Southwest Central and Southeast Central Areas. I also engaged in a quantitative comparison of present-day U.S. Census and crime statistics for the neighborhoods most plagued by prostitution between 1998 and 2004 and for Philadelphia as a whole.⁵⁵

The advantage to using a variety of primary sources, as I have for this second part of my analysis, is that the individual biases contained in each source are in part neutralized by this multiplicity. Due to time constraints, I was unable to exhaust the available evidence for this section of my argument. Nor was I able with historical records

⁵⁵ Statistics from the Neighborhood Information System's *Philadelphia Crimebase*, www.cml.upenn.edu/cbase.

to create a systemized research design, which would have strengthened my associations by allowing me to, in part, control for intervening variables. Rather, this analysis is speculative. My claims are based on a preliminary study that would benefit from a tighter more extensive investigation.

Results and Analysis

The Geography

The shifting spatial organization of Philadelphia's sex trade over the twentieth century does not reduce to a uniform trend of vice de-centralization. Rather, the geography of prostitution in Philadelphia has been erratic. While prostitution has consistently intensified in clusters or along packed corridors, the location of these hubs has oscillated between the City's downtown core and its peripheries. In addition, the extent of de-centralization has increased over time – de-centralized vice in the early twentieth century clustered at the fringes of Center City, while today it locates at the true peripheries, the very outskirts, of the city. Hence, the geography of Philadelphia's sex trade reveals a tension between central city intensification and peripheral intensification.

Intensity and centralization characterized the spatial organization of Philadelphia's prostitution during the Progressive Era. In 1913, the Vice Commission located vice almost exclusively in the *Tenderloin*, an area constituting the Sixth and Eighth Police Districts, loosely bounded by Poplar Street to the north, Chestnut Street to the south, Sixth Street to the east and Broad Street to the west. Within this district, densely packed disorderly and bawdy houses formed corridors of vice along Filbert, Market, Cherry, Callowhill, Noble, Camac, Percy, Fairmount and Franklin Streets. According to the Commission, the Tenderloin contained "by far the largest number of

[vice] resorts,” including parlor and call houses, all devoted to prostitution.⁵⁶ This intense clustering of vice in the central city was aided by the current mayor, Blankenburg’s, explicit policy of quarantining vice with the Tenderloin area. Nonetheless, the Commission noted that many parlor houses existed beyond the Tenderloin (as illustrated by the dotted and solid blue streets external to the Tenderloin on the map below).⁵⁷

By 1916 expanding vice had raised public concern. Blankenburg’s suppression efforts did not survive the change in administration. Following the election of Thomas B. Smith as mayor, vice proliferated more freely, earning Philadelphia the label of a ‘wide-open town.’ Accordingly, wards to the north and south of the original Tenderloin, the forty-seventh and fourth in particular, were “flooded with unmolested resorts” (colored yellow on the map below).⁵⁸ The July 1916 Grand Jury reinforced this characterization, finding in their investigation that “‘bawdy houses...existed not only in the so-called tenderloin, but in sub or extra tenderloins in other parts of the city.’”⁵⁹ The vice raids undertaken by the Philadelphia Police Department in the summer of 1916 targeted these expanding clusters of vice.

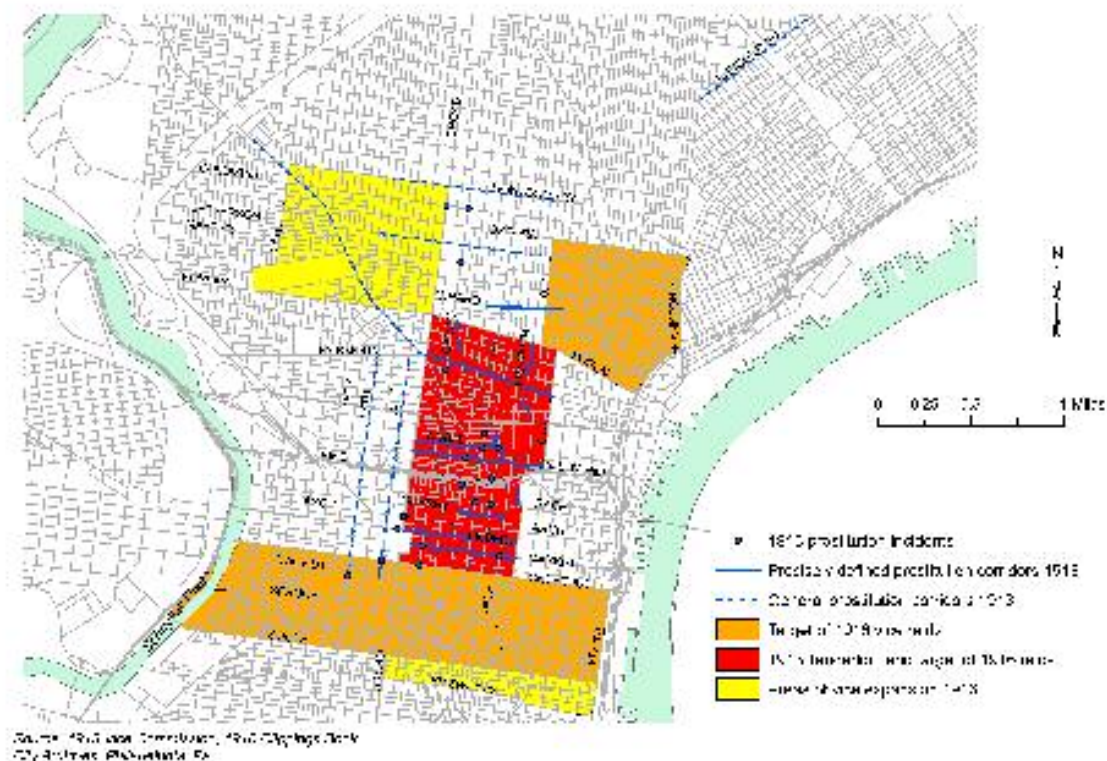
⁵⁶ The Vice Commission of Philadelphia (1913), *A Report on Existing Conditions with Recommendations to the Honorable Rudolph Blankenburg, Mayor of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia, PA, 10.

⁵⁷ The Vice Commission of Philadelphia, 6-7

⁵⁸ “522 Caught in Vice Raid in Tenderloin,” *The North American*, 16 July, 1916, The Philadelphia City Archives

⁵⁹ “Jury Blames Vice of Police, Politics and the Minor Judiciary,” *The Press*, 12 August, 1916, The Philadelphia City Archives

The Location of Philadelphia's Sex Trade 1913-1916

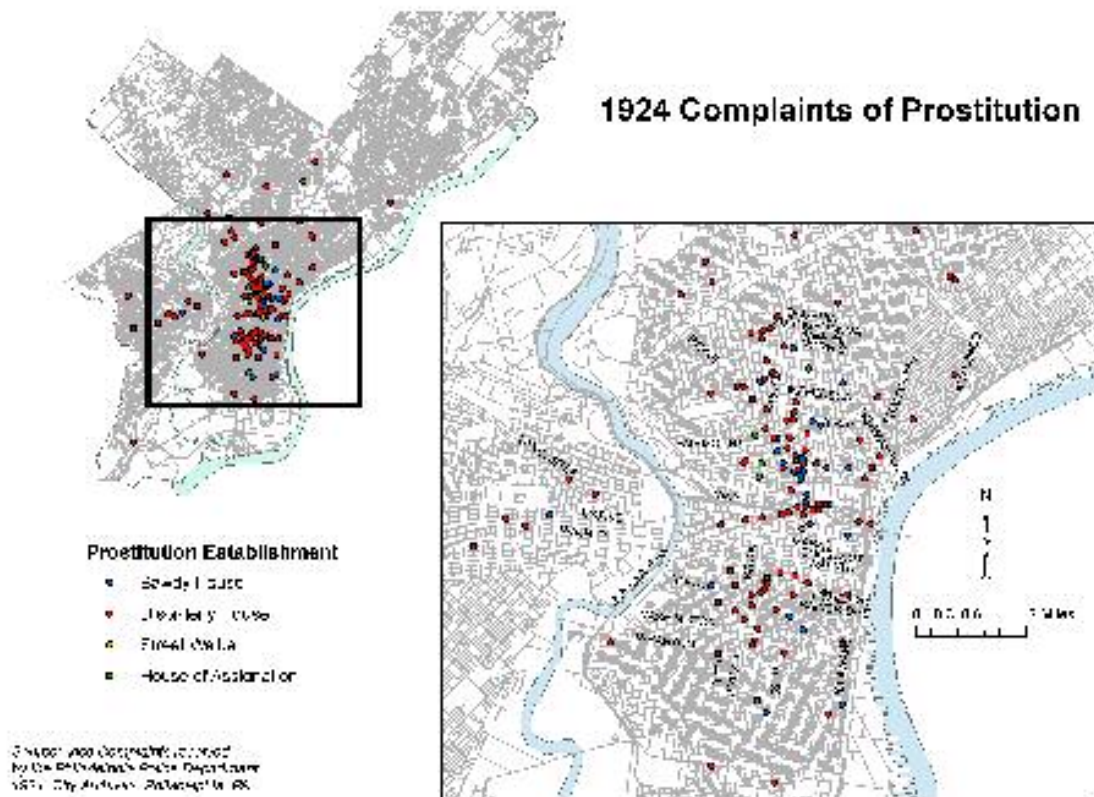


The police raided the Tenderloin (colored red) as well as the sub-Tenderloins on the northern and southern fringes of this original vice locality (colored orange). These raids serve as reliable proxies for the sex trade's actual geography because of the blatant nature of prostitution during this time period. As the Grand Jury noted, the location of vice establishments was known to the police "as a matter of report and record."⁶⁰ The raids show that while the sex trade did expand between 1913 and 1916, prostitution continued to cluster in specific neighborhoods within the urban core. Nonetheless, these areas may not represent the entirety of the city's prostitution. The incumbent District Attorney acknowledged this, commenting that "several police officials have been asked their reasons for not raiding the outlying wards, where it is admitted vice has been rampant for

⁶⁰ Ibid.

years.”⁶¹ The geography then may have been more nuanced than the 1913 Vice Commission and 1916 raids suggest, revealing an early tension between central and relatively peripheral prostitution foci.

Between 1916 and 1930 the majority of commercial sex establishments remained intensely packed in the central business district. The geography of both the 1924 prostitution complaints and the 1930 arrests reflect the Progressive Era organization. Yet, the drift of clusters towards the fringes of the downtown, begun in 1916, continued in the subsequent decades. The complaints exhibit an increased dispersal along the north-south axis, stretching from Dauphin Street into South Philadelphia, and westward beyond the Schuylkill River.



⁶¹ “...Workers Called...Assist Vice Probe,” *The Philadelphia Record*, 1 August, 1916, The Philadelphia City Archives

In addition, the reference map indicates the presence of many outlying complaints. It is possible that these peripheral complaints locate the external vice resorts, to which the District Attorney alluded in 1916. The Vice Squad, however, did not verify the accuracy of the complaints they received. Thus, they are unreliable as a measure of incident-level prostitution occurrence. Considering the complaints in the aggregate, then, their force is focused in the downtown area of the City. Similar to 1916, though, the tension between centralization and decentralization is evident. The alleged North Broad cluster illustrates a pulling away from a sex trade concentrated in the urban core.

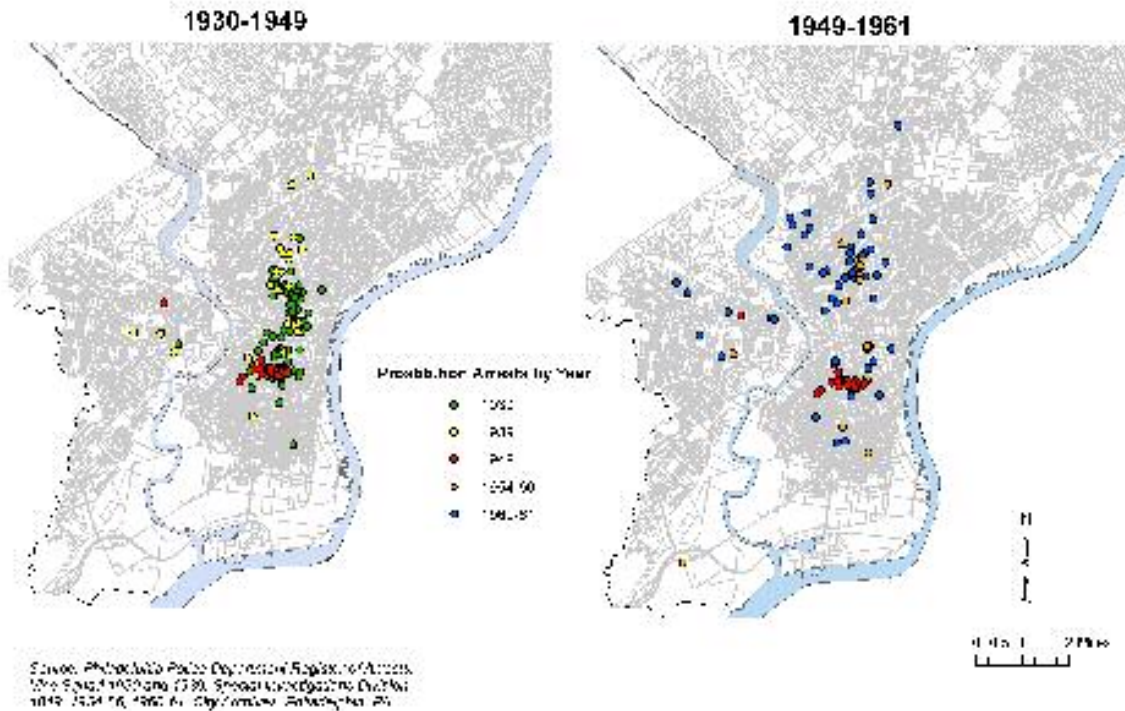
**The Central Geography of Prostitution in 1930:
Mapped alone and onto the Progressive Era equivalent**

Source: 1993 and 1994-1995 Report on the Status of the Pacific Salmon Stocks Department and Special Research Unit, 1993, Olympia, Washington, 25.

One noticeable distinction between 1930 and Progressive Era prostitution is the positioning of activity within these vice districts. Police apprehensions concentrated most near the northern edge of the Tenderloin around Brown and Poplar Streets and near the southern bound of the 1916 raids along South, Lombard and Rodman Streets. Although the 1930 arrests were generally more centralized than the 1924 complaints, the former is still consistent with the pattern of quasi-expansion witnessed since the Progressive Era, whereby prostitution clusters slowly migrated outward from the core of the downtown but remained within the Center City vicinity. Such a pattern suggests the potential for further spread. Hence, while commercialized sex in 1930 would be classified as clustered in a central locality, evidence existed indicating the possibility of future decentralization.

This trend towards decentralization came to fruition over the next three decades, though this tendency was not continuous. Rather, the transition from central to fringe clusters of prostitution in the 1930's, the subsequent return to a core cluster by 1950, and the larger marginalization exhibited in the early 1960's, clearly illustrates the tension between core and peripheral concentration that has characterized Philadelphia's sex trade. In addition, the extent of decentralization increased particularly towards the City's western and southern perimeter.

The Changing Geography of Prostitution Arrests in Philadelphia



The prostitution arrests made by the Vice Squad between June and December of 1939 exhibit a spatial organization that is both peripheral and dispersed relative to the 1930 equivalent. Expanded along the north-south axis of the city, a number of arrests occurred along North Broad between Poplar Street and Susquehanna Avenue. The arrests continue to aggregate into loose clusters, but the intensity of these groupings is diminished, even taking into consideration the fewer data points. Likewise, the Vice Squad apprehended prostitutes in locations farther south and west than in previous decades, making arrests beyond the Schuylkill out to Fiftieth Street and along South Broad to Morris Street. Thus, the 1939 data suggests an inclination towards increasingly peripheral vice expansion. A decade later in 1949, however, this inclination appears to have dissipated. The Special Investigations Division's arrests for prostitution, map into a tight cluster spanning the blocks between Tenth and Eighteenth and Pine and Fitzwater

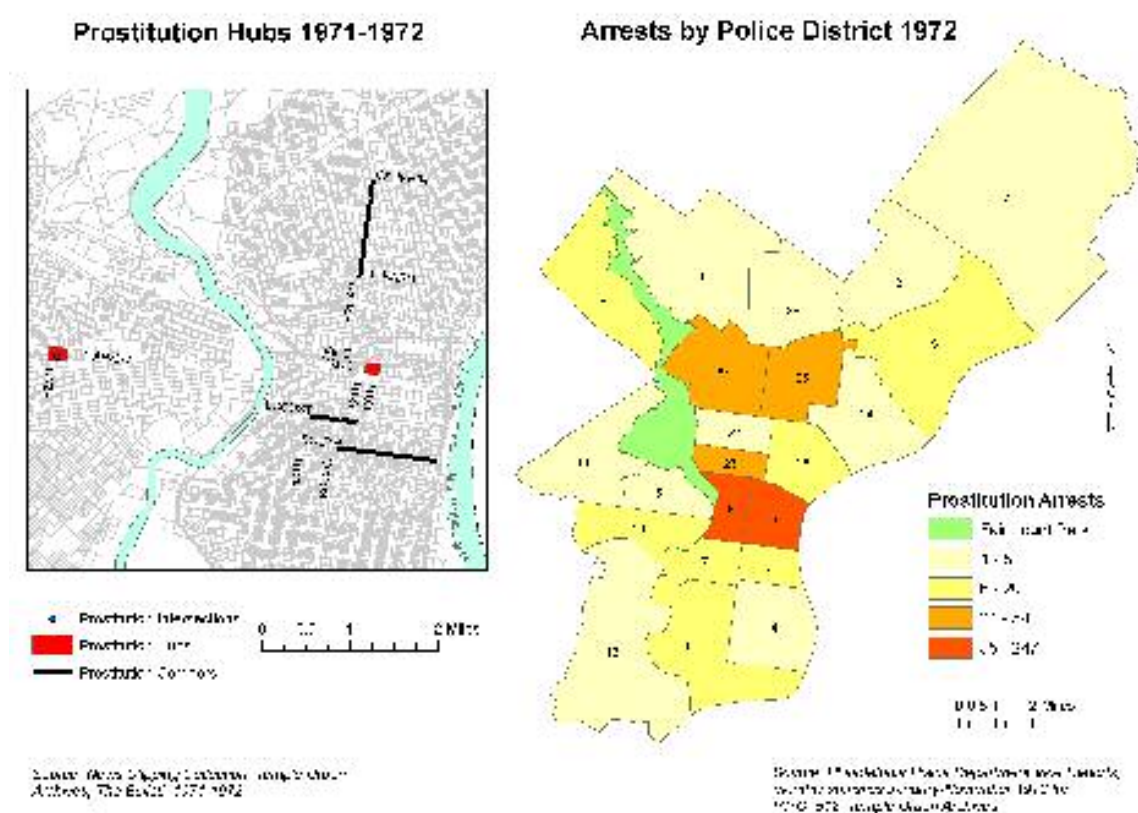
Streets. In fact, this grouping is almost identical in location to the southern clustering of 1930 arrests around Rodman and Lombard Streets, though a sizable portion of the 1949 counterparts occurred slightly west across Broad Street. Between 1939 and 1949, then, it appears that the expansion of prostitution was reversed, causing the sex trade to re-assume its early-twentieth century geography – intensely packed in the city’s downtown core.

After 1949, however, the Special Investigations Division’s arrests form a consistent narrative of spatial decentralization (refer to above map). Revitalization efforts in Center City – for example the construction of the Penn Center and the submersion of the train tracks along Market West – and specific initiatives to combat vice, may have spurred this migration. During the 1950s, for instance, Washington Square – regarded as Philadelphia’s “pervert-park” – was demolished and entirely re-designed with the express purpose of displacing prostitutes.⁶² Consequently, the prostitution arrests for 1954-1956 revert back to the 1939 geography, with expansion north-south along Broad Street. While decentralization frequently implies diffusion, that was not the case with prostitution during this period. Rather, the dispersion occurred between clusters of arrests, with groupings along North Broad Street between Berks and Jefferson, and along South Broad around Lombard Street (similar to the 1930 and 1949 cluster). In 1960 and 1961, this north-south proliferation was complimented by an expansion westward – particularly northwestern, due to an intensification of police apprehensions between Girard Avenue, Glenwood Avenue and Eighth Street. The intensity of clusters during this period was low relative to that in other decades, though loose conglomerations are evident in the geography. Thus, by 1960, the sex trade in Philadelphia had decentralized. While

⁶² Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 92-93.

prostitution still tended to be concentrated in distinct clusters, these hubs had spread towards the peripheries of the City away from the central core.

The geography of the sex trade in the 1970s and early 1980s, however, invalidates a theory of decentralization. Efforts to revitalize the downtown undertaken in previous decades had failed, resulting in considerable disinvestment in the downtown. With disinvestment, prostitution was able to re-gain its footing in the central city, re-emerging in full force. In 1970, the American Social Health Association (ASHA) initiated a study of prostitution in Philadelphia. As a result of their investigation, they identified three, primary vice corridors all within the Center City Area: Race Street by Chinatown, Locust Street from Rittenhouse Square to Twelfth Street, and South Street east of Broad.⁶³



⁶³ Barbara Barnes, "'Love for Sale' Girls Change Operations, But Idea's the Same," *The Bulletin*, 24 May 1971.

Prostitutes did solicit beyond Center City, selling their services along North Broad Street, by Fifty-second and Market Streets in West Philadelphia, and according to the ASHA, in the bars frequented by Naval Yard workers in South Philadelphia.⁶⁴ Yet, these more peripheral vice areas do not negate the revival of the downtown sex trade over the next decade. The crowd of streetwalkers along Locust and South Streets marked a return to Tenderloin-era centralization. The prostitution arrests by police district in 1972 further illustrate the re-intensification of vice in Philadelphia's core. In the two Center City districts, the Sixth and the Ninth, there were 247 and 188 arrests, respectively. By comparison, the number of arrests for the other police districts combined totaled 222, and the district with the next highest frequency (district 23) had only 54 arrests.⁶⁵ While the number of apprehensions is an imperfect measure of prostitution density, these figures do reveal that a disproportionate amount of soliciting occurred within the central business district.

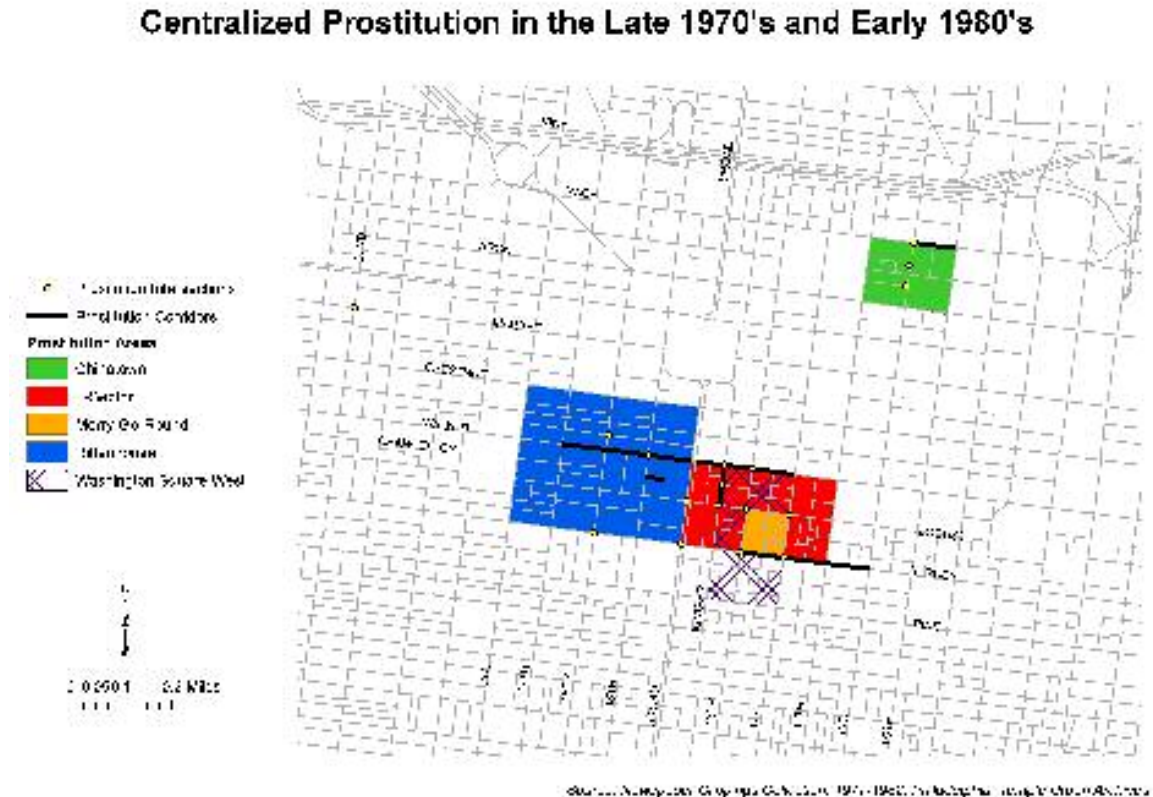
By the late 1970s and 1980s, the intensity of streetwalkers in the heart of Center City had escalated to the point of causing public panic and police crack-down. The failure of redevelopment efforts, like that in Washington Square, was painfully obvious, as the force of the sex trade reverted back to its Progressive Era geography. East of Broad Street, the three-by-two block area bounded by Walnut, Spruce and Eleventh Street, called the *F-Sector*, was declared to be the "worst" prostitution center in the city, drawing both hoards of streetwalkers and "muggers."⁶⁶ In Washington Square West, the so-called *Merry-go-round*, was characterized as a "red-light district concentrated in one city

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ The City of Philadelphia Police Department, Statistics Unit – Research and Planning, "Vice Report," for each month with the exception of December in 1972

⁶⁶ "'The Strip' Called Worst Place, Haunted by Muggers," *The Bulletin*, 10 December, 1981.

block.”⁶⁷ Bounded by Twelfth and Thirteenth east-west and Locust and Spruce Streets north-south, the *Merry-go-round* was the most notorious prostitution circuit in the city.



“It’s saturation,” one resident lamented, “before it was 10 or 15, now its 100 [prostitutes].”⁶⁸ The Rittenhouse Square area also suffered a vice-upsurge. Streetwalkers overtook this affluent commercial district, historically free of prostitution, between Chestnut and Spruce Streets west of Broad.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Chinatown continued to harbor a cluster of bars regularly frequented by prostitutes. This intense clustering of prostitution into areas only a few blocks in radius and all located within the city’s core,

⁶⁷ Julia Lawlor, “A Neighborhood Can’t Get Unhooked” and “Hookers Cruising, Neighborhoods Losing,” *The Daily News*, 9 September, 1980 and 15 August, 1980

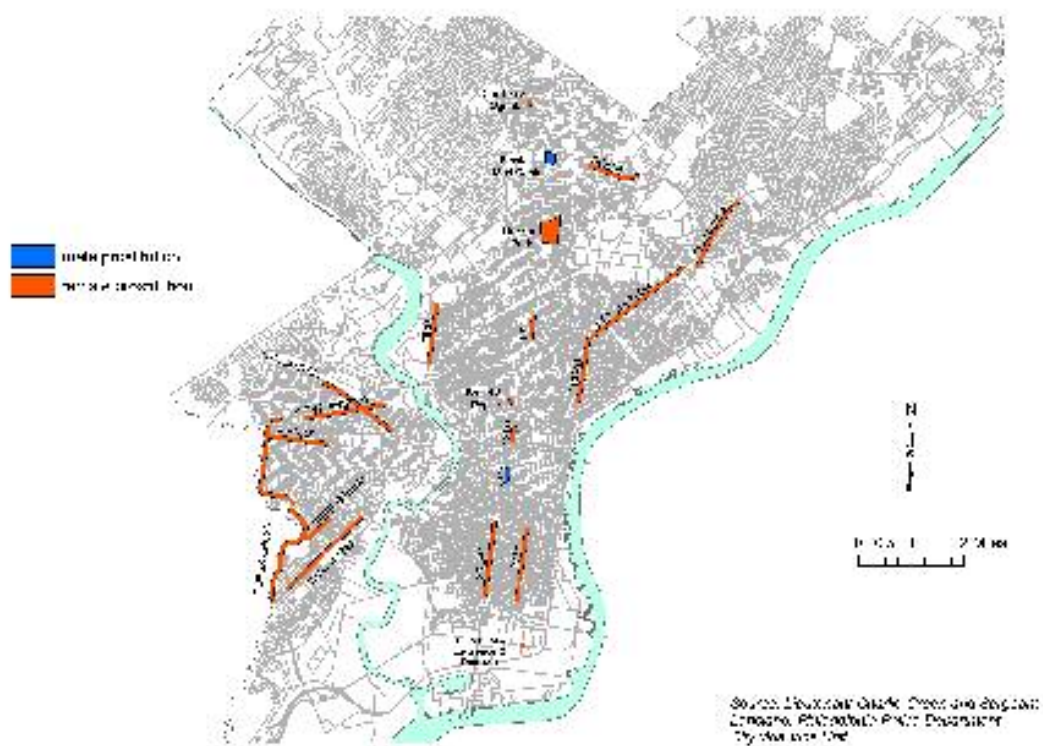
⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Kit Konolige, “Hooker Trade is Picking Up,” *The Daily News*, 29 September, 1977

constitutes a clear aberration from the decentralization trend observed between 1930 and 1960.

This inconsistency continues in present-day Philadelphia, where prostitution has once again reverted back towards the city's peripheries. Similar to the 1950s, 60s and 70s, this vice marginalization may be due to the considerable commercial development and investment, on the part of organizations like the Center City District, in the downtown area – a process which has involved the explicit removal of prostitutes. Accordingly, Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano of the City-Wide Vice Unit locate Philadelphia's street-walking corridors and hubs in the southern, far western and North East regions of the city.

Streetwalking hubs and corridors in present-day Philadelphia



As Green and Lanciano tell it, the extent of decentralization is greater today than in past decades of vice expansion, particularly from 1950-1960. While decentralization in 1960 primarily involved the north-south migration of prostitution along Broad Street and some westward spread, today's street-walking corridors abut the western boundary of the city and stretch deep into Northeast and South Philadelphia. According to Green and Lanciano, this increased marginalization has been evident over the past few years. Since the early 1990s, street walkers have migrated farther north along Frankford and Torresdale Avenues into Mayfair, from Kensington Avenue to up and down Alleghany and Lehigh Avenues as well, and deeper into South Philadelphia along South Seventh Street and to the Truck-stop by Lawrence and Pattison Streets.⁷⁰ As the above map shows, the continued clustering of street prostitution in corridors or around certain localities, like the Truck-stop, indicates the extent to which concentration has been maintained despite the peripheral re-location of streetwalking. Despite the unprecedented decentralization of prostitution today and the considerable re-investment in the downtown, however, massage parlors and gay male prostitution have remained in Center City, around Chinatown and Thirteenth and Locust Streets respectively.⁷¹ The *Philadelphia Crimebase's* maps tracking prostitution arrests since 1998 illustrate well this dual presence of the sex trade – streetwalkers at the peripheries and less conventional prostitution in pockets of Center City. The *Philadelphia Crimebase's* maps tracking prostitution arrests since 1998 illustrate well this dual presence of the sex trade – streetwalkers at the peripheries and less conventional prostitution in pockets of Center City.

⁷⁰ Green and Lanciano.

⁷¹ Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano, Philadelphia Police Department City-wide Vice Unit, Interview, 7 October, 2005

Possible Explanations

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period. I have found that the factors which have most influenced the sex trade's geography are those which inspire prostitutes to react as active agents, to deliberately construct their space according to this factor. Those factors which impose a geography on prostitutes, and render them passive recipients, have had little spatial consequence. Hence, transportation infrastructure and policing – as the derivations for prostitutes' business calculations and arrest-avoiding strategies – have most impacted vice geography in twentieth century Philadelphia.

Economic Factors:

There is a strong strain in the literature attributing the geography of prostitution to market economics. Both Gilfoyle and Symanski present models of spatial change in which the sex trade re-locates according to the location of the market. In nineteenth century New York City, Gilfoyle argues, the entertainment and hospitality industries drew the demand of the same sporting males that prostitutes solicited, causing the sex trade to follow these industries in their migration. Alternatively, Symanski declares foot and motor traffic to be the primary determinants of prostitution's geography. I have considered these theories in the context of twentieth century Philadelphia, in order to determine the extent to which the location of potential clients has affected the spatial organization of this city's sex-trade. The evidence suggests that only transportation, in the form of vehicular traffic and public transit, has had the affect of manipulating vice locality.

In *City of Eros*, Gilfoyle theorizes that the location of theatres and hotels was a major determinant of prostitution's geography in nineteenth century New York City. He describes the historical process by which the former establishments would locate in a

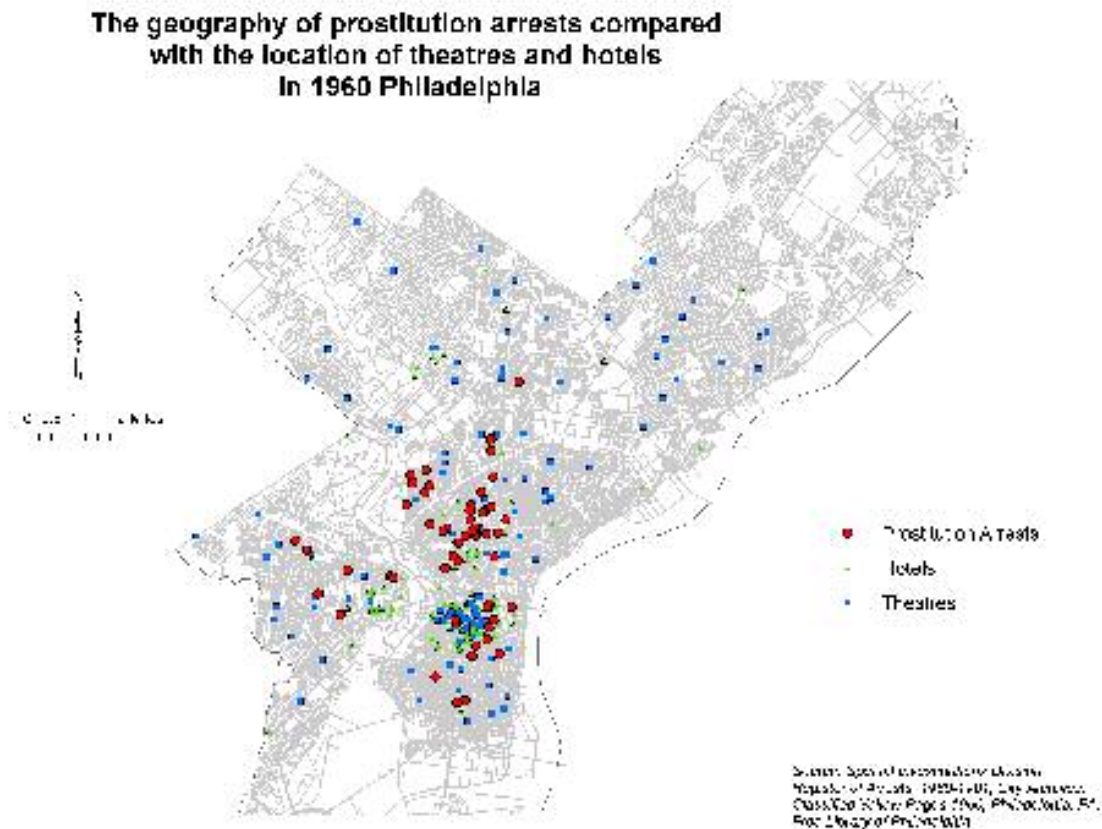
neighborhood of the city, and subsequently draw prostitutes to that area. This was especially true at the end of the nineteenth century when theatres and *sporting-male culture* moved uptown towards Times Square – an area that soon became the city’s hotbed of commercialized sex.⁷² Based on Gilfoyle’s research, I hypothesized that a similar correlation may exist for twentieth century Philadelphia. My research suggests, however, that the pattern of theatre and hotel migration preceding and causing the re-location of vice disintegrates when applied to this city and time period. In Philadelphia, the geography of the entertainment and hospitality industries and the geography of prostitution were not strongly correlated, and the former did not create a market which inspired the re-location of the latter.

During the Progressive Era, there existed a conglomeration of hotels and theatres in the central city area. They were primarily located near the southern border of the Tenderloin and in the Walnut to South Street region targeted by the 1916 police raids. While this was the heart of the contemporary sex trade, it is important to note that these localities also constituted the city’s central business district. Hence, it is intuitive that such establishments would locate in the residential and commercial core of the city. Thus, their location cannot solely be related to vice. The causality Gilfoyle describes for nineteenth century New York City appears non-existent in Philadelphia a few decades later. The below map shows that, even if hotels and theatres preceded prostitution in this area, such a pre-dating did not determine the geography of the sex trade, as its boundaries extend far beyond the bounds of this hospitality and entertainment cluster.

⁷² Gilfoyle, 201-202

In 1930 the overlay between the entertainment, hospitality and commercial sex industries was more complete. The most intense cluster of theatres and the only conglomeration of hotels were situated in the center of the downtown, particularly between Vine and Pine Streets. While the prostitution arrests at this time were located in the same general vicinity, they tended to group farther north around Poplar and Brown Streets and farther south between South and Fitzwater Streets. Hence, what at first glance appears to be a close spatial correlation is not that definitive in actuality. In fact, this 1930 map suggests that the reverse of Gilfoyle's findings may be true for Philadelphia – prostitution preceded the Center City hotels and theatres and potentially played a role in inspiring their establishment. The geography of prostitution in 1930 had changed little since the Progressive Era, yet over the elapsing period there was a significant intensification of hotels and theatres in the Center City area. Since 1915 many more entertainment and hospitality establishments moved into the downtown whereas prostitution had a longstanding tradition in the city's core.

The 1960 map most clearly illustrates a divergence in the geographies of theatres, hotels and the commercial sex trade. In 1960 there continued to be an intense hub of entertainment and hospitality businesses in the heart of the central business district, despite prostitution's migration to the peripheries. Prostitution, then, relocated independently of and away from this clustering of theatres and hotels.



This relocation of prostitution away from the center of hospitality and entertainment activity reveals the inapplicability of Gilfoyle's empirical findings to twentieth century Philadelphia. A hypothesis based on Gilfoyle's analysis of New York City in the 1800s would predict the drawing in of prostitution to this downtown core, resulting in an intertwined geography between these three commercial enterprises. Yet, the 1915, 1930 and 1960 comparison maps reveal the falsity of such a hypothesis. They show no indication of vice following the entertainment and hospitality industries. If any relationship existed between these variables in twentieth century Philadelphia, the data suggests that, in fact, prostitution preceded the development of theatres and hotels in the downtown. The distinction between twentieth century Philadelphia and nineteenth century New York City may be due to disparity in the relative size of the cities'

downtowns and the reputation of their theatres – those in Times Square were nationally prominent while those in Philadelphia did not have comparable renown.

Gilfoyle also links the commercial form of prostitution and its geography. He describes how in nineteenth century New York City the transition from brothel to tenement and apartment prostitution affected the spatial organization of prostitution.⁷³ Building from Gilfoyle that different types of prostitution motivate different spatial layouts, I have considered whether there has existed a spatial distinction in the geographies of indoor versus outdoor prostitution for twentieth century Philadelphia. As I have interpreted it, indoor prostitution includes those formal establishments devoted to vice such as brothels and disorderly houses, while outdoor prostitution denotes street walking. I have found that for twentieth century Philadelphia the form of prostitution – indoor or outdoor – does not appear to have a decisive effect on the sex trade's geography. This is most clearly exhibited during those time periods when both indoor vice institutions and streetwalking have flourished.

The time period between 1940 and 1960 represented a transitional era in which the sex trade shifted from predominantly indoor to predominantly outdoor prostitution. Streetwalking existed in a limited capacity during the Progressive Era, as illustrated by the 1913 Vice Commission which discovered prostitution in 156 parlor houses, 78 call houses, 76 furnished room apartments and 127 saloons⁷⁴, but reported only 15 incidents of streetwalking in their Appendix. The 1916 police raids targeted only indoor establishments as well. Similarly, the Vice Squad arrests from 1930 and 1939 suggest

⁷³ Gilfoyle, 200-201.

⁷⁴ The Vice Commission of Philadelphia. *A Report on Existing Conditions with Recommendations to the Honorable Rudolph Blankenburg, Mayor of Philadelphia*, 1913, pp. 6-7.

that indoor prostitution continued to occur disproportionately during this decade. By the 1970s, however, disorderly and bawdy houses were virtually nonexistent in Philadelphia. As Captain Frank Voll of the Police Department's Morals Squad succinctly phrased it in 1975, "the brothel...is a thing of the past."⁷⁵ It is unclear at what exact historical moment the city's brothels disappeared and what incited this change. Nor does the literature provide much guidance. Symanski investigates the closing of brothels in early twentieth century Chicago, which he attributes to waves of police repression – first in response to the findings of the 1910 Vice Commission and again in the 1920s. The former resulted in the closing of 135 brothels, while the number of prostitution *bordellos* in the city had been halved by 1923.⁷⁶ This had the direct consequence, he argues, of stimulating a vibrant commerce of street prostitution.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, he admits, brothels maintained a significant presence in Chicago's sex trade into the 1930s. To survive they simply became less visible and delved "deeper into the community life."⁷⁸ Symanski's analysis, then, offers little insight for dating and explaining the apparent extinction of prostitution houses in Philadelphia. His findings do suggest, however, that brothels may have actually subsisted in this city, just further underground or as camouflaged into the neighborhood landscape.

Regardless of the extent, exact date or cause of brothels' disappearance, the prostitution arrests for the mid twentieth century reveal this period to be one in which both indoor and outdoor prostitution co-existed in roughly equal proportion. The arrests for 1949, 1954-1956 and 1960-1961 show the intertwined geographies of these two strands.

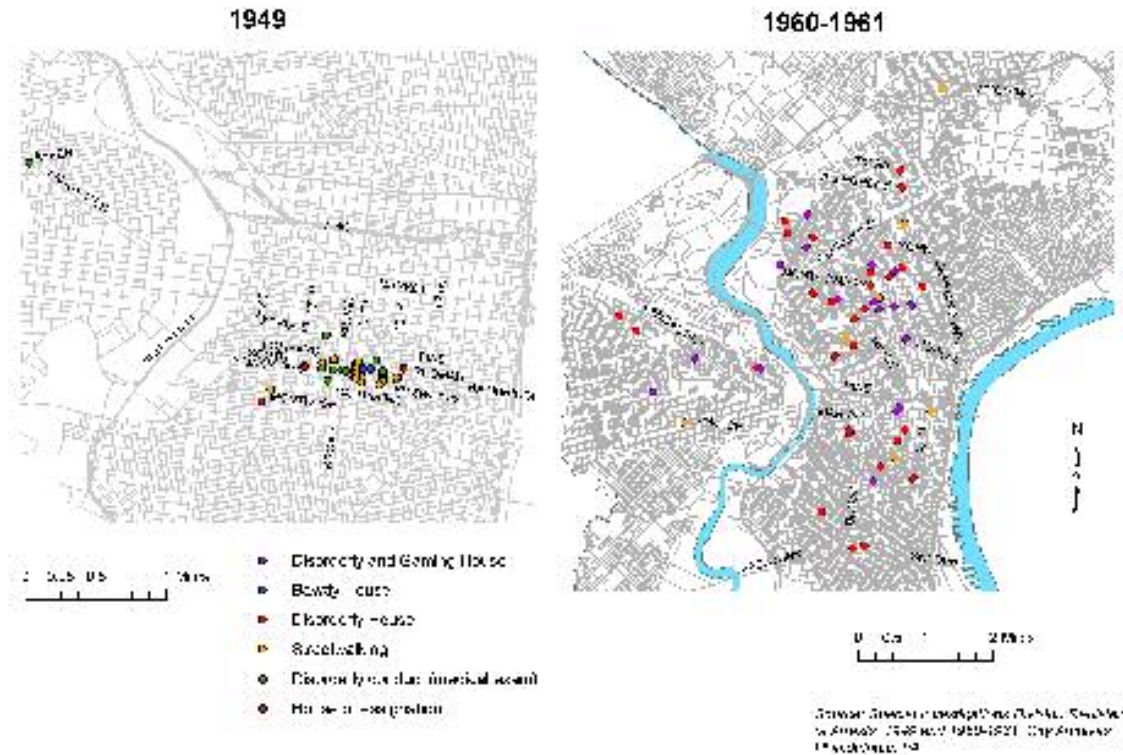
⁷⁵ Dan Enoch, "City to Shield Morals of Bicen Visitors," *Daily News*, 10 November, 1975.

⁷⁶ Symanski, 199-201.

⁷⁷ Symanski, 196.

⁷⁸ Symanski, 206.

The geography of Indoor and Outdoor Prostitution in 1949 and 1960-1961



In 1949, over half the Special Investigations Division's arrests were for street walking. These incidents conform to the same central city geography as that for the disorderly and bawdy houses and the Houses of Assignment. All the apprehensions are clustered together with no divergent spatial pattern differentiating the arrests for inconsistent types. A similar thing can be said for the 1954-1955 prostitution arrests. They cohesively stretch along North and South Broad Street, though the majority of streetwalking arrests were loosely conglomerated within the aggregate geography during this period. By 1960 the sex trade had shifted to the peripheries, but this decentralization is evident with both the disorderly house and the streetwalking arrests. The arrests for both enterprises appear equally dispersed in an indistinguishable spatial organization. If it is true that

streetwalking or indoor prostitution distinctly influenced the geography of Philadelphia's sex trade, then during these transitional years one would expect to see divergent spatial layouts for each form relative to the other. This, however, was not the case.

Those time periods when only one form of commercial vice dominated the market, and yet the sex trade's geography changed, provide further evidence that the form of prostitution, in itself, has not been a determinant of the sex trade's geography in Philadelphia. Such was the case in 1930 and 1939, years in which the Vice Squad only registered one streetwalking arrest.⁷⁹ In 1930 the arrests from bawdy and disorderly houses, bawdy apartments and houses of assignation were all centrally located in clusters between Poplar and Fitzwater Streets. But by 1939, these same types of arrests had decentralized. Thus, it appears that indoor prostitution has not inspired a particular geography. Alternatively, since the 1970's, outdoor prostitution has predominated. Yet, while streetwalkers saturated Center City during the 1970's and early 1980's, today they traverse peripheral corridors. Nor, then, has outdoor prostitution as a form been a determinant in its own geography. When the form has held constant, as was the case with brothels between 1930 and 1939 and with streetwalking since the late twentieth century, other factors must be attributed to any change in the sex trade's spatial organization.

The one exception to this claim is massage parlors as a separate form of indoor prostitution. Philadelphia's massage parlors have occupied a fixed locality in the area around Chinatown since the mid to late twentieth century, unaltered by the shifting patterns of decentralization and re-centralization that have afflicted the rest of the sex trade. This suggests that there is something attributable to the specific form of massage

⁷⁹ This may have been due to changes in police jurisdiction and may not accurately represent the actual frequency of street prostitution. Nonetheless, however, the arrests reliably illustrate the disproportionate share of indoor prostitution during this time period.

parlors as a type of prostitution enterprise that causes this change-resistant geography. Asians have run Philadelphia's massage parlors almost exclusively, since their establishment as a significant force in the city's sex trade.⁸⁰ Given their location in and around Chinatown, it is likely that these parlors are in fact Chinese owned and operated. As such, Ivan Light's analysis of the Chinese vice industry between 1880 and 1940 may provide insight into why Philadelphia's massage parlors have assumed a fixed geography since the latter part of the twentieth century. Light argues that cultural heritage was a primary determinant shaping the organization of Chinese-run vice during that time period. He also found that, by the 1940s, many Chinese had invested in restaurants and tourism establishments in their local Chinatowns.⁸¹ His conclusions suggest that Philadelphia's massage parlors may have remained in the Chinatown vicinity both for the cultural network and the market of male tourists this district provides.

The spatial organization of streetwalking, however, is subject to a greater fluctuation than that of fixed indoor prostitution establishments. Streetwalkers are not tied to a physical establishment; they are freed of the spatial restraint inherent to working in a vice-house. They have the power of mobility, to relocate to where the market exists. According to Symanski, street walkers use this freedom deliberately, to construct their own geographies based on where clients are in demand of their services. Consequently, the location of transportation infrastructure in a city influences the geography of street prostitution, he claims, because prostitutes actively seek out pedestrian and vehicular traffic.⁸² Based on my analysis, Symanski's claims hold for twentieth century

⁸⁰ Green and Lanciano.

⁸¹ Light, 469.

⁸² Symanski, 171-174.

Philadelphia. The evidence suggests that the city's streetwalkers have strategically congregated around transportation hubs and along highly trafficked corridors since at least the early 1900s.

Though relatively few in number, Progressive Era streetwalkers displayed such economic savvy. As evidence, the 1913 Vice Commission reported seeing 22 female solicitors in 35 minutes at Broad Street Station. At Reading Terminal Station they witnessed a similar phenomenon, where between 7:30 and 8:00 p.m. eleven girls worked the upstairs and nine the main floor. The Commission added that some of these women had been soliciting there for two years or more.⁸³ Similarly, during the 1916 police raids the press described how “the street-walkers mysteriously vanished from the highways.”⁸⁴ The fifteen streetwalking incidents that the Vice Commission lists in its Appendix suggest that these “highways” included Broad Street, Columbia, Ridge and Fairmount Avenues and Girard Avenue from Sixth to Eleventh Street in particular.⁸⁵ These women then strategically situated themselves on the main thoroughfares of the Tenderloin and sub-Tenderloins and in the area's principal public transportation centers. Indoor vice resorts, too, frequently located themselves on busy streets. Lombard, South and Christian Streets – primary targets during the 1916 raids and the location of many 1930 and 1949 prostitution arrests – were major “through streets with considerable traffic” and were also traversed by Street Cars.⁸⁶

This prostitution-transportation link continues today according to Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano. Green described the vibrant and longstanding street trade under the Market-Frankford L, dating back to his childhood during the 1960's (where the

⁸³ 1913 Vice Commission, Appendix B.

⁸⁴ “522 Caught in Vice Raid in Tenderloin,” *The North American*, 16 July, 1916.

⁸⁵ 1913 Vice Commission, Appendix B.

⁸⁶ Philadelphia City Planning Commission (10 May, 1950), “Certification of the Southwest Central Area for Redevelopment.”

L is elevated along Frankford Avenue). While Lanciano added that the “customers are guys driving by,” prompting street walkers to frequent those thoroughfares that are congested with vehicular traffic. For similar reasons, they noted, prostitutes congregate at the truck-stop by the intersection of Lawrence Street and Pattison Avenue. They explicitly cited transit and car transportation as a principle factor determining street-prostitutes’ locations.⁸⁷

The relationship that develops between transportation and prostitution, however, is multi-directional. Prostitutes are drawn to transit hubs for the market they provide, but there is a concurrent dialectic process whereby street walkers become associated with an area, drawing pedestrian and vehicular traffic to them. Hence, the supply (the street walkers) goes to the demand (male clientele) as the demand goes to the supply, illustrating an economic truism and creating mutually agreed upon sex marketplaces. The street trade concentrated in the heart of Center City during the 1970’s and early 1980’s best illustrates the multi-directional nature of this process. The so-called *Merry-go-round* in Washington Square West represents the active participation of the male clientele in constructing prostitution’s geography. *The Bulletin* described the *Merry-go-round* as “the clock-wise block-square circuit that men of a sporting nature drive these nights to hook the hooker,” which at 1:15 A.M., according to the reporter, “was two lanes of...traffic, bumper to bumper from 12th to 13th.”⁸⁸ Men ventured to the prostitutes in the dead of night, in a residential area of tightly packed streets unsuited for the traffic jam they created. Such a coalescence of street walkers and clients seems unnatural in light of prostitutes’ historic tendency to frequent major thoroughfares and train stations. This union most likely resulted from a mutual construction of the marketplace, whereby

⁸⁷ Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano, 7 October, 2005.

⁸⁸ Walter F. Naedele, “Where have all the hookers gone?” *The Bulletin*, 8 September, 1980.

prostitutes seeking men and men seeking prostitutes converged on this unlikely spot. The *Merry-go-round* problem became so dire, in fact, that the municipal government tried to undermine the demand coming to the supply by placing “signs forbidding left turns on certain side streets [to prevent] customers from cruising around the busiest blocks.”⁸⁹ Recognizing the close connection between the sex marketplace and space, the state attempted to subvert the market by altering its spatialization.

Law Enforcement:

Much of the literature on prostitution connects law enforcement practices with the spatial organization of the sex trade. Symanski, in particular, underscores the spatial implications resulting from street walkers’ strategic reaction to police activity. In the case of Philadelphia, it is clear that policing has affected the geography of prostitution over the twentieth century. The evidence suggests, though, that law enforcement practices other than the extremes of police corruption and intense crack-down have had an equal, if not greater, influence over vice locality. Changes to the Philadelphia Police Department’s internal structure and shifts in enforcement tactics have significantly altered the geography of the city’s sex trade.

Police corruption has been a longstanding reality in Philadelphia. As the Pennsylvania Crime Commission wrote in their 1974 *Report on Police Corruption and the Quality of Law Enforcement in Philadelphia*, “[w]idespread corruption has been a constant problem which has plagued the Department since its inception.”⁹⁰ Accordingly, this report was the fourth such investigation into police fraud since the beginning of the

⁸⁹ Donna Shaw, “Dawn breaks on hard times for ladies of the evening,” *The Bulletin*, 22 October, 1981.

⁹⁰ The Pennsylvania Crime Commission (March 1974), *Report on Police Corruption and the Quality of Law Enforcement in Philadelphia*, 91.

twentieth century. During the Progressive Era a system of unofficial *police protection* flourished, prompting a Grand Jury investigation into the root of the corruption in the summer of 1916. The Jury found that the Police Department knew “as a matter of report and record” the locations of all the city’s disorderly houses yet failed to sanction them.⁹¹ Commenting on the influence of *police protection*, whereby disorderly houses regularly bribed vice officers to buy their allegiance, the President of the vice-fighting *Law and Order Society* testified that “the [people who] operate dives wouldn’t open a house for two weeks or two years unless there were assurance of protection.”⁹² This comment illustrates the spatial implication of corruption, as commercialized vice tended only to exist in locations where protection was guaranteed. Similarly, the Pennsylvania Crime Commission lamented the rampant protection system at work in the bars which employed prostitutes for the benefit of their clientele. They also described the less formal system by which streetwalkers who could not afford regular payments occasionally paid off policemen.⁹³ Green and Lanciano also mentioned corruption. The City-wide Vice Unit, they said, was the consequence of widespread corruption scandals in the 1980’s, which prompted the City to shift from division-level vice enforcement to centralized vice control.⁹⁴ Corruption, then, did not end in 1974, rather it continuously plagued the Philadelphia Police Department throughout the twentieth century. Given the longevity of this condition, it is unlikely that police corruption caused the oscillation of prostitution’s geography over this time period.

While corruption has been a constant, the tactics and internal structure of the Police Department have varied greatly. Authorities on anti-vice enforcement in

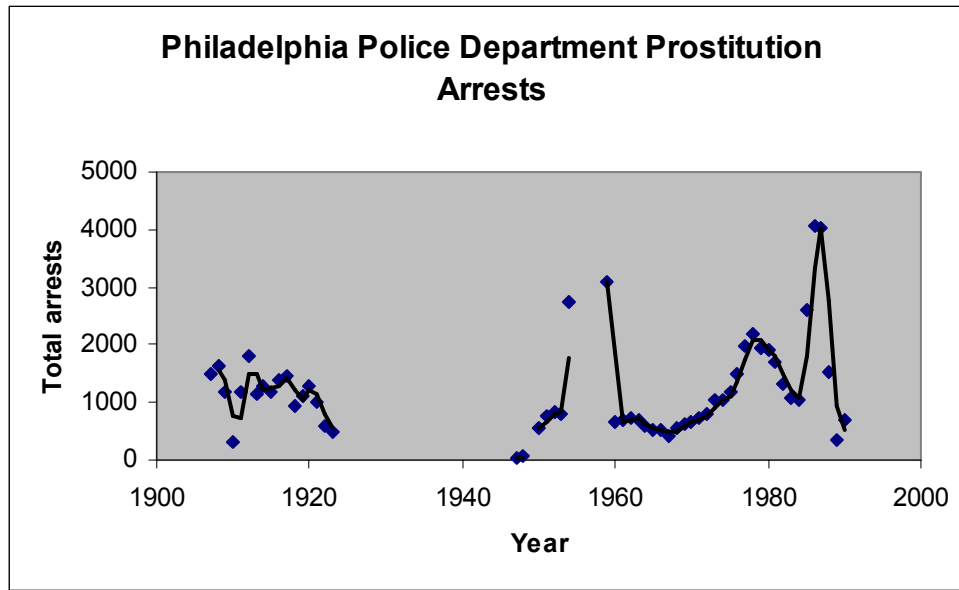
⁹¹ “Vice Still Rampant, Grand Jury Asserts,” *The Public Ledger*, 30 September, 1916

⁹² “Police Connived at Vice, Gibboney Tells Grand Jury,” *The Evening Bulletin*, 26 July, 1916

⁹³ Pennsylvania Crime Commission, 220-221.

⁹⁴ Green and Lanciano.

Philadelphia have long credited such changes with altering the spatial organization of prostitution in the City. The total number of prostitution arrests by year best illustrates the erratic nature of vice policing practices over the twentieth century.⁹⁵



This chart indicates fluctuations in police activity. While the number of actively working prostitutes for each year is unknown, the slope of the line suggests periods of increased or decreased enforcement. In addition, extreme dips and jumps in arrest totals over the span of one or two years suggest that a change in policing tactics occurred during that time period. As such, this chart indicates a great inconsistency in the methodology of anti-vice enforcement, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. The extent of this variation also suggests that small procedural changes on the part of the Police Department had drastic consequences for prostitution's criminalization.

⁹⁵ Philadelphia Police Department Annual Reports, for the years 1907-1923, 1947-1948, 1950-1954, and 1960-1990), available at the City Archives. When this total was given in components – Bawdy house keepers, Bawdy house inmates, Bawdy House frequentor (only in 1947 and 1948), and Streetwalking – as was the case from 1907 to 1948, I summed these components to arrive at a total number of prostitution arrests.

Evidence found in Police Department reports and other sources support this claim and reveal its spatial implication. According to the corresponding Police Annual Report, in 1913 the Department initiated a policy of quarantining all houses of prostitution. “No one was permitted to enter such houses except those known to reside therein, patrolmen being stationed nearby the houses for this purpose,” the Report notes, resulting in “the positive closing of 112 houses of prostitution in the so-called tenderloin.”⁹⁶ Less drastic than an all out police raid, this tactic had the effect of suppressing prostitution and altering the spatial organization of the sex trade in the central city. Yet, the subsequent mayor, Thomas B. Smith, with his Director of Public Safety, terminated the quarantine system. This reversal too had spatial consequences. According to the *North American* in 1916, “the consequence [was] that the tenderloin resumed [a] bright red hue,” and Philadelphia “gradually [became] a ‘wide-open town’ again” where vice expanded unrestrained.⁹⁷ Tactical changes made by the Police Department have also had an effect on present-day prostitution according to Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano. They described how in 1998, the department-wide instillation of COMSTAT to track crime trends altered their methodology for targeting streetwalkers. Since COMSTAT’s inception, the City-wide Vice Unit has prioritized patrolling those areas identified as having escalated crime, particularly robberies and burglaries which often are associated with prostitution. They do so, on one hand, because prostitution tends to occur in areas with a high incidence of quality of life crimes and, on the other, because arrested prostitutes often know valuable information about who and how these crimes were committed, which they can choose to pass on to the Department in exchange for sentence mediation. By altering their primary

⁹⁶ “Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Public Safety and of the Superintendent of the Bureau of Police for the Year Ending December 31, 1913,” City of Philadelphia, 1914, 94

⁹⁷ “522 Caught in Vice Raid in Tenderloin”

patrol locations, the City-Wide Vice Unit, in turn, influenced the spatial organization of prostitution – a link I will support in the following paragraphs.

Likewise, shifts in the institutional structure of the Police Department have had spatial ramifications for the sex trade. In their *Investigation of Vice, Crime and Law Enforcement*, the 1937 Grand Jury examined the root of prostitution's proliferation in the Sixth and Nineteenth Police Districts (together the area between South and Vine Street, Seventh Street and the Schuylkill River). The Jury concluded that the "wide-open conditions in the Sixth District were the natural and probable consequences of the appointments, removals, resignations, promotions, demotions and transfers which occurred in the Bureau of Police during the years 1936 and 1937."⁹⁸ For the Nineteenth District, they described its transition from being "fairly well 'closed' when the Vice Squad, under the direction of Captain of Detectives John T. Murphy, was in charge of enforcement," to "[a]lmost immediately, although gradually... '[opened] up'" after the Squad disbanded in November of 1936.⁹⁹ Hence, the Jury credited personnel and organizational changes with changing the spatial organization of prostitution. Similarly, another incarnation of the Vice Squad was abolished in 1952 to enhance district-level control.¹⁰⁰ It is likely that this structural change contributed to the marked distinction between the central clustering of the Special Investigations Division's prostitution arrests in 1949 and their more dispersed layout in 1954-1956. I cannot prove this beyond speculation, but the history of Police departmental changes affecting vice locality suggests that the disbanding of the Vice Squad in 1952 contributed to this geographic shift.

⁹⁸ Pennsylvania Special Grand Jury (1974), *Criminal Justice in America: Investigation of Vice, Crime and Law Enforcement, Presentments of the Special (October 1937) Grand Jury and Instructions of the Court*, New York: Arno Press, 39

⁹⁹ Pennsylvania Special Grand Jury, 85

¹⁰⁰ Philadelphia Police Department, "Annual Report 1952," 3

Procedural and structural changes to vice policing have had an impact on the geography of prostitution because prostitutes react strategically to law enforcement. Like Symanski theorizes, prostitutes in twentieth century Philadelphia have utilized a variety of coping strategies to evade arrest, and these strategies have been spatial in nature – prostitutes locate themselves to minimize the risk of police interference. As illustrated in a previous paragraph, paying protection fees to police officers is the dominant coping strategy under conditions of corruption. While not directly spatial, such a strategy promotes a fixed vice orientation, restricted to the geographic jurisdiction of the corrupted officers. During periods of elevated police enforcement, mobility becomes the principal strategy for prostitutes. The police recognized this tendency among prostitutes during the 1913 quarantine and deliberately tried to counteract it by keeping close watch of the women changing residences “to see that they made no attempt to enter the same business in another section of the city.”¹⁰¹ The police failed to undermine such coping during the 1970’s and 1980’s, allowing prostitutes like “Linda” to relocate from “12th and Locust to 12th and Spruce...then out to Broad [Street]” in the wake of a police crackdown.¹⁰² Similarly, the press acknowledged the futility of police efforts to suppress street walking along the *Merry-go-round* circuit, noting “recent pressure...has merely ‘fanned’ the problem...the prostitutes have moved south as far as Pine [Street].”¹⁰³ Green and Lanciano referenced the use of coping strategies in the present-day. Street walkers, they said, “will try and avoid us, and use a side street” or they will shut down completely,

¹⁰¹ “Annual Report of the Director of the Department of Public Safety and of the Superintendent of the Bureau of Police for the Year Ending December 31, 1913,” 94-95

¹⁰² “Hooking: Notes from a Survivor,” *The Bulletin*, 2 October, 1981

¹⁰³ “Hookers Cruising, Neighborhoods Losing”

while massage parlors will temporarily close after a police bust then re-locate under a new name.¹⁰⁴

These strategic methods of evading police apprehension, then, have directly affected the spatial organization of prostitution, both indoor and outdoor in Philadelphia. With each change in law enforcement procedure, organization or leadership, the police's relationship towards the prostitute changes, requiring both parties to adapt, with spatial implications for the sex trade's geography.

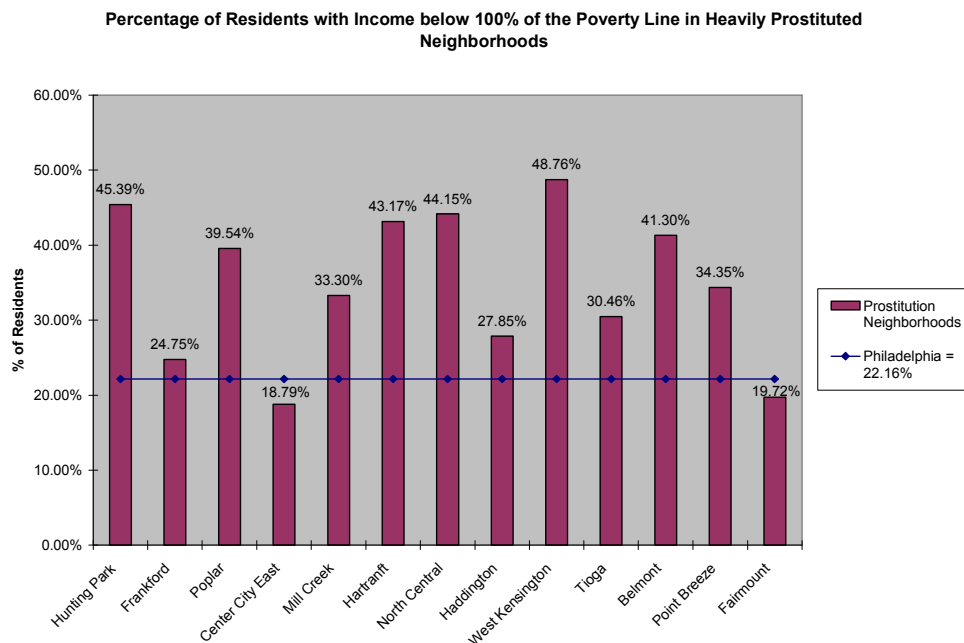
Demographic Factors:

In the literature, Hubbard theorizes that moral stigmatization is the primary factor contributing to the decentralization of the sex trade. This stigma is reflected in the relegation of vice to marginal, impoverished areas. Accordingly, I have examined demographic and quality of life measures in historically vice-ridden areas of Philadelphia, in order to speculate whether moral concerns have influenced the geography of prostitution in this city. Symanski's "geopolitical sink theory" similarly locates vice in poor, minority areas where residents lack the political capital necessary to inspire the concern of dominant society.¹⁰⁵ The link between marginalization and prostitution in twentieth century Philadelphia, however, has been more nuanced than Hubbard and Symanski claim. While prostitution has frequently occurred in indigent and deteriorated areas, located both at the city's peripheries and in its downtown, the history of vice in Center City indicates the extent to which vice has also plagued the city's most affluent neighborhoods.

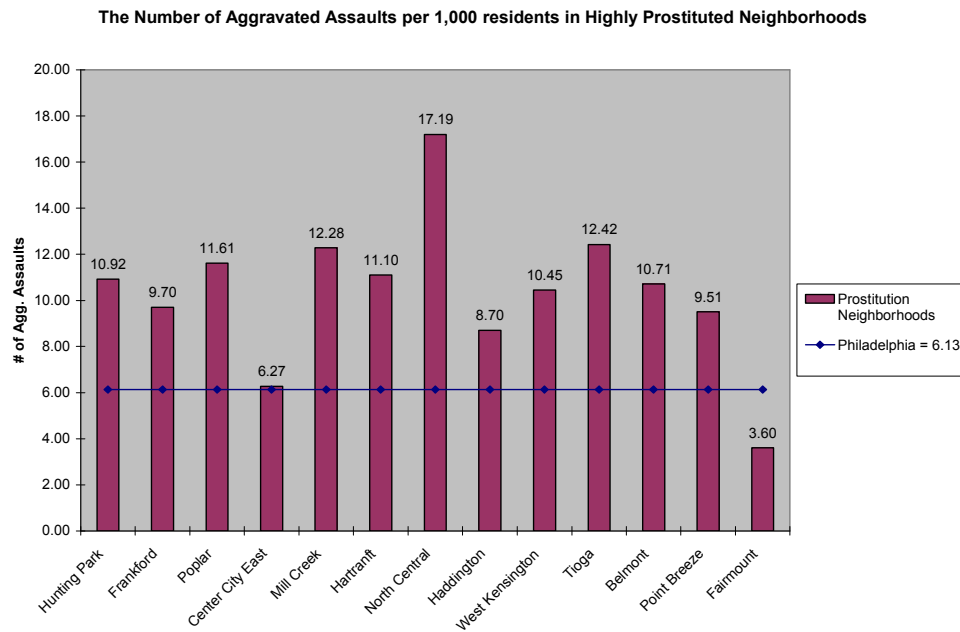
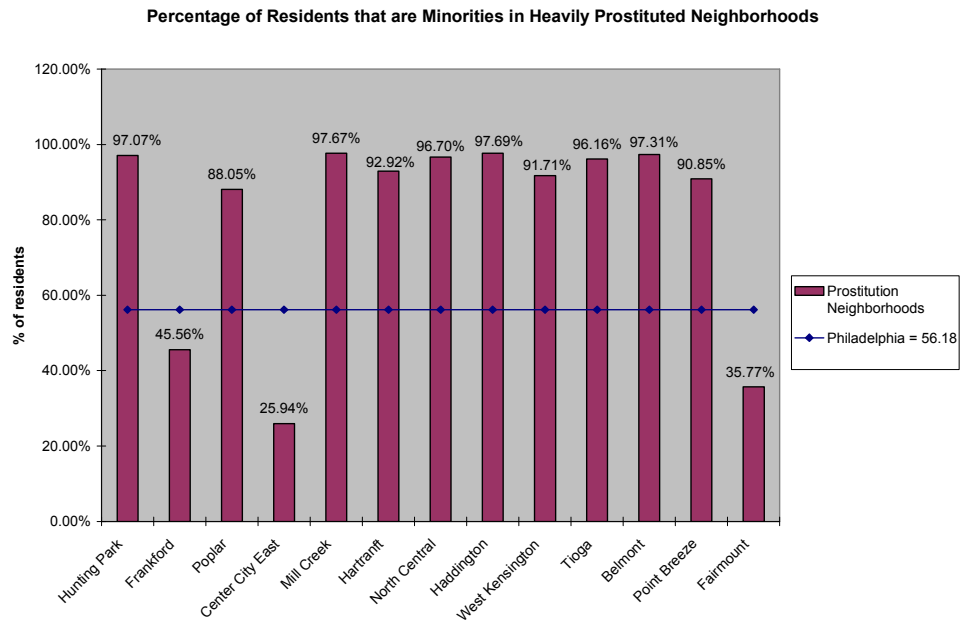
¹⁰⁴ Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano, interview

¹⁰⁵ Symanski, 129.

Present-day street prostitution is most intense in peripheral neighborhoods, which have higher concentrations of poverty, minorities and aggravated assaults than Philadelphia as a whole. The Neighborhood Information System (NIS) has identified for each year between 1998 and 2004, the five NIS neighborhoods with the highest frequency of prostitution arrests. Over this period, eleven such neighborhoods have been identified: Poplar (in the top five for 1998 through 2004), Frankford (1999-2004), Hunting Park (2000-2004), Mill Creek (2001-2003), Center City East (2002-2004), Hartranft (2000, 2002), North Central (1999, 2001), West Kensington (1998, 2000), Haddington (2001), Belmont (1999), Point Breeze (1998) and Fairmount (1998). In the following three charts, I compare these neighborhoods to Philadelphia as a whole, considering the percentage of residents with incomes below 100 percent of the poverty line in the year 2000, the percentage of minority residents in 2000 (where minority is defined as African American, Asian and Hispanic), and the number of aggravated assaults committed per every 1,000 people in 2004.¹⁰⁶



¹⁰⁶ U.S. Census Data and Crime Statistics from the *Philadelphia Crimebase*, www.cml.upenn.edu/cbase



As indicators of quality of life, the disproportionate levels of poverty, racial segregation and crime in these neighborhoods indicate that the areas most heavily populated by prostitutes are also among the city's worst off. Yet the correlation weakens when one considers the neighborhoods with the highest number of prostitution arrests between

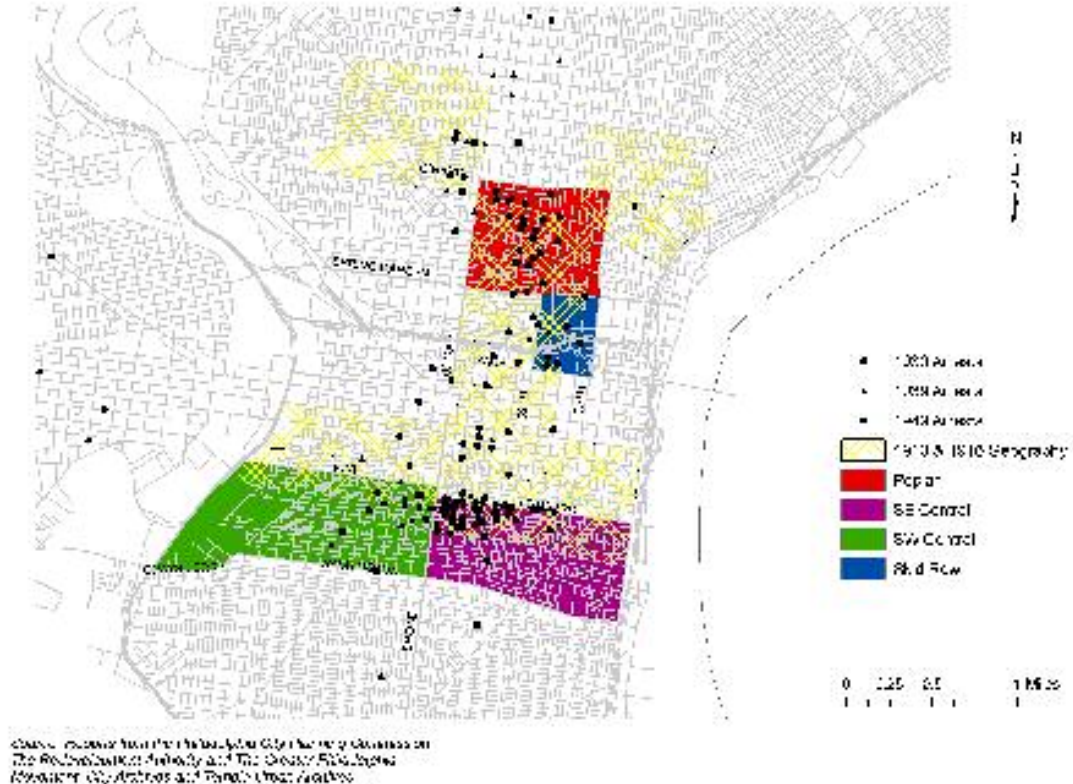
1998 and 2004.¹⁰⁷ Hunting Park and Frankford are the areas of the city with the most prostitutes according to the *Crimebase* data, but they do not have the worst quality of life statistics. Frankford, in particular, has a poverty population only 2.5 percent higher than that for Philadelphia as a whole, and its minority percentage is more than ten percentage points below the city-wide equivalent. Furthermore, Fairmount and Center City East defy Symanski's "geopolitical sink theory." They contain fewer poor and minority residents and have fewer (in the case of Fairmount) or roughly as many aggravated assaults as the City in its entirety. The existence of elevated vice in these neighborhoods over the last few years, then, challenges the theory that prostitution only occurs in marginal locations. Center City prostitution, most of all, complicates this association.

Center City has long been the commercial and residential heart of Philadelphia, perceived as neither geographically nor socially marginal. Yet, the living conditions and demographics in many downtown neighborhoods, especially before mid-century, have not always reflected affluence. The fluctuating presence of the sex trade in the central core has afflicted these deteriorated areas, but it has not been limited to them, affecting the wealthier Rittenhouse and Washington Square West communities in the 1970's and 1980's. In the first half of the twentieth century, prostitution flourished amongst the squalor, "overcrowded" and "unsanitary" dwellings, and congested streets of the Poplar, Southeast Central, Southwest Central and Skid Row areas.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ It is important to note again that the arrest counts are inaccurate as quantities, according to Green and Lanciano, but they do have integrity as proportional measures of prostitution arrests – i.e. the neighborhood with the highest number of arrests according to the *Crimebase* does in fact have the most arrests, though the quantity of arrests given is an undercount.

¹⁰⁸ Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "Certification of the Poplar Area for Redevelopment" (11 February, 1948), "Certification of the Southeast Central Area for Redevelopment" (9 January, 1948), and "Certification of the Southwest Central Area for Redevelopment" (10 May, 1950). City Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

Prostitution in Philadelphia Redevelopment Areas



In addition to being deteriorated, these neighborhoods' demographics reflected the marginal status of their residents. A large poor population resided in Poplar, where the Philadelphia Housing Authority's low-rent public housing project, Richard Allen Homes, was located. Alternatively, Southeast Central housed non-whites in 42 percent of its dwellings in 1948, following an influx of African Americans during the previous decades. The neighborhood also contained a strong immigrant presence of Italian, Russian, Polish and Irish decent.¹⁰⁹ In Southwest Central, the low quality of life was manifested in the area's "higher mortality rates and higher incidence of tuberculosis, venereal disease, crime and juvenile delinquency than the respective averages for the

¹⁰⁹ Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "Philadelphia Housing Quality Survey: Southeast Central Redevelopment Area," September 1949. City Archives, Philadelphia, PA

City.”¹¹⁰ And Skid Row was a ghetto of transient homeless men, many of whom were unemployed, physically-disabled and/or chronic alcoholics.¹¹¹ Hence, in the first half of the twentieth century, prostitution’s geography overlapped with a geography of deteriorated neighborhoods and marginal communities, despite their shared centrality.

Prostitution during the 1970’s and 1980’s, however, tells a different story. Streetwalkers solicited in the heart of Center City West, along strips of Walnut and Locust Streets, amongst some of the city’s priciest real estate and finest commercial establishments. “The city’s toniest shopping and office district, west of Broad between Chestnut and Spruce,” lamented the *Daily News*, “has exploded into an open-air, flesh-for-sale carnival.”¹¹² Echoing the same sentiment, a Locust Street shopkeeper complained to *The Bulletin* that “there are used condoms all over the sidewalk near Rittenhouse Square on Sunday mornings.”¹¹³ Such blatant vice in the living room of the powerful goes against Hubbard and Symanski’s theories. Thus, the sex trade in twentieth century Philadelphia cannot be simply characterized as relegated to socially and politically marginal areas. If moral stigmatization has impacted the geography of prostitution, it has been unsuccessful in completely locating vice out of the sight and mind of dominant society.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the spatial narrative of prostitution in Philadelphia has been one of contradiction. While prostitution has consistently intensified in clusters or along packed corridors, the location of these hubs has fluctuated

¹¹⁰ “Certification of the Southwest Central Area for Redevelopment”

¹¹¹ Greater Philadelphia Movement, “What to do before Skid Row is Demolished,” 28 October, 1958, Temple Urban Archives, Philadelphia, PA

¹¹² Kit Konolige, “Hooker Trade is Picking Up,” *Daily News*, 29 September, 1977.

¹¹³ “A Hooker’s Moving in Next Door,” *The Bulletin*, 7 October, 1977.

between the City's downtown and its peripheries. In doing so, the spatial organization of the sex trade has revealed an essential tension between core intensification and peripheral intensification. This erratic geography challenges the clear transition evident in the literature – the shift from centrally-located vice districts during the Progressive Era to a dispersed layout in the mid to late twentieth century. In particular, the Philadelphia case study complicates Richard Symanski's simplistic depiction of prostitution's dispersion and growing a-spatiality over this time period. The geography of Philadelphia's sex trade does, however, illustrate Philip Hubbard's nuanced distinction between vice decentralization and diffusion. Yet, Hubbard's claim that the real change in the spatialization of vice over the twentieth century has been the transition from clustering in central red-light districts to concentration in marginal localities also appears incomplete when applied to Philadelphia. Thus, the oscillation of prostitution in this city between central and peripheral intensifications contributes a new and conflicting strand to the literature on the twentieth century sex trade.

The factors which have most affected the sex trade's geography in twentieth century Philadelphia are those which have inspired prostitutes to react strategically. As such, the spatial organization of prostitution has resulted from a dialectic involving prostitutes' exercise of their own agency and police repression. Illustrating supply-and-demand savvy, prostitutes have flocked to transportation infrastructure – train stations, major thoroughfares, congested intersections, etc. – as marketplaces of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Alternatively, police repression has forced prostitutes to relocate to avoid arrest. Law enforcement, then, in particular changes to policing tactics and structure, have had significant spatial implications for the sex trade. In response to police activity, sex-workers act as defensive strategists, using mobility as a vehicle for

deception. Symanski makes an argument for the spatial consequence of both of these factors, which the Philadelphia case study reinforces. He identifies bus stops and intersections with traffic lights as “preferred soliciting sites” for the profit-maximizing opportunities they offer.¹¹⁴ Symanski also denotes police repression as a “principle causative agent” of vice re-location, citing examples in New York City, San Francisco and Oakland.¹¹⁵ Philadelphia’s sex trade, then, appears similar to that in other American cities with regard to the determinants of its spatial organization.

The formation of Philadelphia’s vice geography, however, is not consistent with Hubbard’s argument, which is based primarily on prostitution in Western Europe. He denies that the spatial organization of commercial sex is a “mere outcome of supply-and-demand economics.”¹¹⁶ Instead, he identifies moral stigmatization as the factor responsible for the relegation of vice to marginal, impoverished areas. Yet, in Philadelphia, the sex trade has subsisted in some of the City’s most affluent neighborhoods since the beginning of the twentieth century; afflicting the dominant classes of society the same as it has more marginal populations. Additionally, a hypothesis based on Gilfoyle’s analysis of nineteenth century New York City fails when applied to Philadelphia a century later – the data suggests that the location of theatres and hotels in this city has been inconsequential for the spatial organization of the sex trade. According to these scholars, moral stigma and complimentary industries impose a geography on the sex trade. Thus, they characterize prostitutes as relatively powerless. The Philadelphia narrative indicates, however, that it is the prostitute, as her own agent, who has deliberately constructed the geography of Philadelphia’s sex trade.

¹¹⁴ Symanski, 174

¹¹⁵ Symanski, 187

¹¹⁶ Hubbard, 115

My conclusions have implications for public officials trying to anticipate and circumvent future vice re-locations. The movement of Philadelphia's sex trade between the poles of centralization and marginalization since the beginning of the twentieth century suggests that prostitution may revert back to a core orientation in the near future. Yet, the increasing extent of decentralization – whereby vice is now peripheral relative to the City in its entirety as compared to the early twentieth century when it was peripheral relative to the downtown – and current downtown renewal efforts may indicate a more lasting shift away from Center City prostitution. Regardless, public officials should focus on the specific attributes around which vice congregates, particularly transportation infrastructure. The data suggests the Philadelphia's streetwalkers are drawn to heavily trafficked locations. Consequently, officials should increase enforcement along major thoroughfares, at train stations, bus stops, and other hubs, like the truck-stop in South Philadelphia. Lieutenant Green and Sergeant Lanciano of Citywide Vice have been employing this tactic and have found much success.¹¹⁷

Similarly, the Philadelphia Police Department should be cognizant of the effect that variations in policing tactics and departmental structure can have on the geography of prostitution, and consequently anticipate vice re-location. Accordingly, officials should seek to implement procedural changes as efficiently and smoothly as possible in order to prevent enforcement from faltering during the transition. Police corruption has also been a longstanding phenomenon in twentieth century Philadelphia with considerable spatial implications. The current system of centralized vice control was implemented to prevent district-level police officers from *protecting* prostitution and the subsequent clustering of vice in those districts. Nonetheless, widespread bribery has occurred even during periods

¹¹⁷ Green and Lanciano, interview

of centralized vice control, as the investigation of the 1937 Crime's Commission illustrates. Hence, municipal officials should be vigilant in their assessment of the current Citywide Vice Unit. Likewise, they should be wary of intense pockets of prostitution in areas where few arrests have been made as historically this has been an indication of police corruption. Law enforcement, thus, must be aware of their own role in influencing the geography of prostitution and recognize prostitutes' use of mobility as a strategy of deception.

Both my conclusions and their real-world implications exist within the larger context of Philadelphia's history. My consideration of the market, law enforcement and stigmatization factors evident in the literature cannot fully explain the geography of prostitution in this city. Rather, historical forces have consistently intervened, critically influencing the spatial organization of Philadelphia's sex trade since the beginning of the twentieth century. Accordingly, the concentration of vice in the early 1900s resulted largely from the widespread corruption and machine politics dominant at that time. Prostitution was unofficially permitted to flourish in the central business district for the extensive tribute system and political patronage it inspired.¹¹⁸ Alternatively, the re-centralization of prostitution between 1939 and 1949 may be attributable to the impact of World War II and the influx of sailors drawn to Philadelphia's naval yards and ship building industry. Likewise, the oscillation of vice in the second half of the twentieth century between the city's core and its peripheries correlates with periods of investment and disinvestment in the city's central business district. In the 1950s and 60s, the City Planning Commission and the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority devoted significant

¹¹⁸ Lincoln Steffens illustrates politicians' reliance on prostitutes to pad the vote and circumvent the rules of electoral politics in "Philadelphia Corrupt and Contented," *The Shame of the Cities*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1904), pp. 138-139.

resources to urban renewal in the downtown, with the consequence of pushing out vice. The failure of these projects to halt the city's decline, however, was evident by the 1970s and 80s. The municipal administration resigned their interventionist role, leaving Center City's deterioration unchecked. With this disinvestment, prostitution re-emerged in the residential and commercial core – itself becoming a blatant symbol of decay. As such, vice helped to catalyze widespread public grievance in the 1990s. This outcry led to a revival of investment and development efforts in the central business district – a process which has depended on the removal of prostitutes. Consistent with the rest of the late twentieth century, then, current downtown revitalization has once again motivated the sex trade's decentralization. Whether this present-day commitment to Center City will be sustained is unknowable, nor can we foresee the impact of future historical forces on prostitution's geography. Yet, if the twentieth century experience is telling, Philadelphia's sex trade will continue to intensify in those locations dialectically produced by governmental repression and prostitutes' own assertion of their rights.

Appendix: Notes for Additional Research

This study should be regarded as a preliminary investigation into the geography of Philadelphia's sex trade. My claims are speculations based on the available data, but further research is needed to further substantiate my arguments and to provide a more complete narrative of prostitution in this City since the beginning of the twentieth century. More incident-level data, particularly for the post-1950 period, would strengthen my conclusions about how the sex trade's spatial organization has changed. Likewise, Police Department records for units other than the Special Investigations Division and for the period after 1960 would increase the reliability of my results. Interviews with prostitutes themselves or social workers who have worked with prostitutes over the last half century would provide an additional perspective and would test the validity of my police data.

Concerning the factors which have affected vice locality, my claims would benefit from further research. To reinforce my hypothesis about the inconsequence of theatre and hotel geography, it would be useful to map these variables against present-day prostitution. It would be interesting to see if the location of hotels and theatres tended to gradually de-centralize as the result of the sex trade's migration towards the peripheries. Additionally, future research should investigate whether a greater spatial correlation exists for other business types, such as pubs and saloons, which have traditionally attracted a similar clientele to that of prostitutes. With regard to the distinction between indoor and outdoor prostitution, my analysis would benefit from a comparison of the geographies of different forms of indoor prostitution, such as disorderly houses versus bawdy houses. Future investigation into these relationships may complicate my claim that

distinct forms of prostitution have not had dissimilar geographies in Philadelphia.

Likewise, additional research should examine massage parlors as a vice entity in attempt to determine why they have remained an anomaly to the shifting geography of the City's sex trade. Furthermore, my claim about the importance of police repression would be better substantiated by a more complete tracking and analysis of all the procedural and internal changes that have occurred in the Philadelphia Police Department since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Beyond the factors I have already considered, a future project should consider the role of other forms of state intervention – particularly city planning and urban renewal initiatives – in altering the geography of prostitution. Lastly, the impact of pimping on the sex trade's spatial organization, as an intervening variable influencing prostitute business and coping strategies and subsequently limiting their agency, must be considered. The role of pimping has significant implications for my conclusion about the importance of prostitutes constructing their own geographies.

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